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AN

APOLOGY

FOR THE

BOOK OF PSALMS,

IN

FIVE LETTERS;

ADDRESSED TO THE FRIENDS OF UNION IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

BY REV. GILBERT M'MASTER, D.D.

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word."—*Isaiah*.
"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable."—*Paul*.
"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."—*Messiah*.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN compliance with repeated requests, another edition of the following Letters is given; but neither in the mere spirit of controversy, nor in that of party proselytism. From the former the author is constitutionally averse, and for the latter he never had either disposition or talent.

The subject, while all know that it is not the only one—nor yet the chief one—of interest to the church of God, is, nevertheless, judged to be of great importance. That among good men there should be serious differences of opinion and practice upon it, is matter of regret, and should it in any instance be treated in an improper spirit, without seriousness and without candour, the reason of regret would be greatly enhanced. Of the difficulties which stand in the way of reform, in this subject of discussion, we are not unapprized. Distinguished names, though but incidentally connected with a measure, give to it a sanction of some au-

thority, and the practice of two or three generations gives a form and stability to the habits of the present age. The purity of motive, too, which may be connected with a very ill-advised measure, and the plausibility attached to reasons, in themselves defective or false, will often contribute to the permanence of abuses. The casual relation, likewise, of what is evil to what is of great excellence, lends its aid to the same end. And to the intellectual, moral, and religious worth, the extended activity, great resources, and happy influence of several, if not of all, of those portions of the household of faith, where the evil of which we complain exists, we are not insensible. In their possession of these advantages we rejoice, and for their appropriate results, in a happy progress, we cherish a confiding hope.

While plain and candid discussion of the subject of the church's Psalmody may be both profitable and becoming, we are well persuaded that the tone and spirit of angry controversy are unsuitable, must do harm, and ought to be avoided. A revision of the following Letters has not led us to any change of mind as regards our original position, nor do we perceive that the reasons assigned in sustentation of that position should be abandoned. They are

therefore retained. Were we disposed to complain, we think cause of complaint has been furnished by the manner in which, generally, our position and argument have been met in the numerous pamphlets by which the discussion of the subject was taken up. But we complain not. Something else than our position was assailed, and our main arguments remained untouched. To irrelevant matter and personalities we make no reply. It is easy to lose sight of the main question by turning aside to that which is incidental, or but remotely, if at all, connected with it.

It is assumed that this is not a mere party work for the purposes of mere partyism. Few deny, that, throughout all the Departments of the Church, a reform is needed in her Psalmody. The subject now advocated is a solemn institution of the Church of God, authorized by her standards, and the main points of which, now advocated, are sustained by many, if not by all, of the ablest men of her several denominations. The argument is not a little sectional one, but a plea upon the broad ground of Christian institution, for Christian consistency, truth, and influence, in a deeply interesting part of the solemnities of Zion. In the sustentation of the plea, the voice of some of the most distinguished men of the Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist,

families of the great Christian commonwealth, is distinctly heard.

It will be remembered, it is trusted, that our plea is not, exclusively, for any specified version of inspired psalmody. A faithful version is that for which we plead. We have no opposition to the elegance of poetic diction, nor, in the æsthetics of a version, to the gratification of a refined taste. Nor, whatever may be said of its expediency, do we exclude as unlawful in psalmody any inspired matter of sacred poetry. The question of mere expediency can produce no serious difficulties. Our plea is for a true version of the book of Psalms, in the psalmody of the church, as of divine authority, of superior excellence, and of peculiar suitableness. Its exclusion from that part of public worship is evil, and, to the interests of true religion, is of evil consequence. The evil is enhanced by substituting instead of that *inspired* book, an *imitation*—a partial imitation—of it, emanating from the source it did, and its adoption urged, and its use continued, by such arguments as were used in favour of the measure. It is only added, what we have formerly said:—“Inconclusive reasoning, when seen, we will readily abandon, and to correct misstatements, if any we have unconsciously made, will afford us unfeigned pleasure.”

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

EVERY POWER OF MAN SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD—IMPORTANCE OF PSALMODY—DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON THE SUBJECT—DIVISION OF THE CHURCH—IMPORTANCE OF UNION—PROPOSAL OF ACCOMMODATION—HOPES OF SUCCESS—MISTAKES CORRECTED—ATTENTION TO THE SUBJECT REQUESTED.

DEAR BRETHREN:—Every subject which relates to the peace of the church, the institutions of God, or the exercise of the saint, must be interesting to you. Psalmody, in its matter and forms, has always claimed, and deservedly obtained, no small share of Christian attention.

Every faculty of man should be consecrated to the service of his Creator. In the promotion of the divine glory, and in the advancement of personal holiness, all the principles of our nature, by a mutual influence, ought to co-operate. Man's powers of intellect, the sensibilities of his heart, and the capacity of expressing these sensibilities in appropriate strains of melody, are laid in requisition by our holy religion. Psalmody, employed in the spirit of its institution, is peculiarly calculated to engage the heart, and to call forth an elevated devotion. In no other act of social religion,

is an opportunity afforded for so much unanimity, in actual and congregated expression of devout sentiment; and, it is more than probable, no other part of instituted worship is so well adapted to interweave sentiment with every fibre of the heart of man.

“There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touch’d within us, and the heart replies.”*

Who has not felt the melting influence of the soft strains of well-conducted music? And how powerfully the martial band operates, by inspiring with courage, is well known to the warrior in the day of battle. When sentiment is accompanied with the fascination of music, it requires no common effort, even when the principle is disavowed, to break the charm.† This suggests to us the importance of proper matter for the Psalmody of the church of God; it urges the necessity of circumspection, to guard against the introduction of incorrect sentiment, or of crude and superficial opinions, in the sacred songs we employ. How often error is thus introduced into the mind of man, and blasphemy shed before the throne of the Eternal, need not now be told.

The celebration of God’s praise, in suitable songs,

* Cowper.

† Let me, said Judge Hale, be ballad-maker for a nation, and I care not who are legislators.

is one of his own institutions. It is his appointment that his people "come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." Hear the New Testament injunction: "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." The practice was exemplified by two illustrious heralds of the cross, Paul and Silas; and that in circumstances very unfavourable to the exercise; it was at midnight, and when confined in the dungeon at Philippi. In his own practice, our Redeemer himself gave his sanction to the social singing of praise, as an ordinance divinely appointed. After the institution of the *eucharistic* feast, he and his disciples 'sung a hymn:' one of those comprised in the *hillel*, that is, those psalms from the 113th to the 118th, inclusive.

This part of our worship is confessedly important. Its importance is manifested by the time devoted to it in our solemn assemblies; by the disputes agitated respecting it in several sections of the church; and by the care which God has taken to furnish his worshippers with a system of songs; songs indited by his Spirit, and remarkably adapted to the condition of the subjects of his grace, in their progress through life. The present brief, and it is hoped, candid investigation of the subject, is justified by these considerations, as well as by the fact that opposing opinions respecting it divide, at this day, in practice, not a few of the Saviour's friends; opinions and practices, maintained respecting this portion of our sacred services, that consti-

tute one of those numerous exciting causes, that have aroused into warring factions so many branches of the church of God.

This state of things is not as it should be. The church of the Redeemer is *really* one:—that she is not more *visibly* one, is the sin, as well as the affliction of her members. Without just cause, no division or separation, in this holy corporation, should receive the countenance of any friend of God, or advocate of Zion's peace. No practice, no maxim, calculated to wound the sensibilities of the meanest among the children of grace, unless enforced by divine authority, should be indulged; for to wound the sensibilities is to alienate the heart, and, if not to affect the conscience, certainly to enlist the passions. The natural result of irritated passions is separation and a state of hostility.

Practices long indulged become familiar, and, in their associations, not unfrequently venerable. In religion, habit often connects its expedient forms with its divinely appointed institutions; and, except the mind be more than usually versed in the science of abstraction, a change in the one is not unlikely to lead to an infringement of the other. He understands but little of the constitution of man, or but slightly regards the interests of society, who, with the wanton hand of rashness, would expunge the convenient institutes which have long given body to opinion, and order to practice. The friend of peace, and the patron of order, will therefore

treat with delicacy those forms that are recommended by ancient usage. A departure from this course can only be justified by a full and well-founded conviction, that such forms are either essentially wrong, or, from certain circumstances, pernicious in their effects. This caution must still be greater, when we go beyond forms, to the substantials of religion; to the matter of that worship which God himself has ordained to be offered before his throne.

In the psalmody of the church there is, indeed, as in other social institutions, convenient forms, in which, according to circumstances, a variety may be innocently practised; but there is also something in it of positive, divine appointment, with which no man may interfere. The matter must be moral and evangelical. In this we must hearken attentively to the voice of the Lord; and take heed lest our fear toward him be *taught by the precepts of men*. Our spiritual song must be that which God approves.

That good men entertain different sentiments, as respects the application of the general truth now stated, is readily admitted. One believes he may, with divine approbation in public worship, employ the effusions of the pious muse, which are marked by no special disconformity to the sacred oracles. Another feels his conscience bound exclusively to the use of those songs which God has given by the inspiration of his Spirit; which his church has

used; and which he believes was designed for the saints in the public, social worship of the church. These songs are found in the pages of the book of God.

It is not now intended to discuss the merits of this question. My object in this letter is to find a point where the jarring parties may meet in concord; where they may ungird their armour, forget their animosities, and unite for awhile in a song of praise to God their Saviour. In this age of Bible triumphs, and catholic liberality, I cannot think the desired point is difficult to be found. May not both parties meet in the use of those songs indited under the inspiration of God? In the use of those songs, presented in the most correct version to be found, could any complain of inroads on tenderness of conscience, or the purity of worship? No. Methinks I hear both with ecstasy exclaim, "In the use of these songs we can cordially unite. They are the words of God; and they are sweet to our taste."

But is this response an illusion of fancy, or is it a reality? I trust it is the deliberate and practical sentiment of every friend of the book of God. Acting upon it in the present instance, would be attended by the happiest consequences. The more that Christians are conversant with these songs, the more their fulness will be seen; and the more familiar they become with their matter, its adaptation to the purpose of sacred praise will more ob-

viously appear. Why then rend in pieces the body of Christ? Is not the propriety of the contrary practice, the use of hymns of human composition, doubted by numbers who are seriously devout? Is it not opposed by not a few in different ecclesiastical connexions, who, in talent, information and fidelity, are not inferior to the chief of those from whom they differ? Is there, by such a measure, any end to be gained of sufficient value to counter-balance the loss of one bond of union in the family of Christ? Let this be seriously pondered.

But granting for a moment that the admission of hymns of human structure, instead of inspired songs, is in itself allowable, this inquiry, and it is an important one, offers itself to our minds: *Is it expedient?* Let us attend to the language of Paul: "Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.* When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." He loves his body. Its humblest members he regards with kind affection. "He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye."

As friends of Zion's peace I address you on this

* *A stumbling block.*—How become a stumbling block, in the case before us? By inducing them to think and assert that the use of scripture psalms is calculated to make heresy triumphant, spoil devotion, and *naturally* lead the worshipper to sing his own *malignant execrations* against his own personal enemies; and to think he did God service by *breathing out revenge!* These are the weak ones, and this is the stumbling in the case of Psalmody.

subject; and again, I repeat the question: Why, in a matter of doubtful disputation, to say the least of it, rend the church of Christ? Consider, ye friends of godliness, the great importance of union in the household of faith. Seriously reflect on the fearful consequences of disunion among those who love the Lord, and who ought, with cordiality, to love one another. To effect this harmony, the Father of mercies purposed to shed abroad his love in his people's hearts; to accomplish it, the Son of God humbled himself and became obedient unto death; to unite those living stones that compose the building of mercy, he shed his precious blood; to effect the same end he appears as our intercessor within the vail; his prayer now, as formerly on earth, is that those who are given him *may be one*. In answer to his intercessory prayer, and in pursuance of the same design of grace, the Holy Ghost descends into his church. The whole tendency of his operation is to bring the subjects of his grace into *one*; not only as regards their connexion with Jesus, as their living head, but also as respects their principles, dispositions, hopes and practice.

Among the professed disciples of the Redeemer, diversity of views, and difference of practice, do indeed prevail; but let each of them be assured that no just ground of these proceeds from the Spirit of God. So far as they are actuated by him, the disciples of Christ, in sentiments and pursuits, are the same. He, though acting in different sub-

jects, and under different circumstances, is never at variance with himself. This fact, taken in connexion with existing animosities among the avowed friends of religion, affords no flattering assurance to the present age of a great measure of the Spirit's influence being enjoyed. I am, indeed, aware that there is much talk of union; and that schemes are devised, no doubt with the best designs, for its extension: but you likewise know that the elements of schismatical faction also have a place in the church. That there should be more of union is readily confessed. That means more efficient for its attainment must be employed, all but the most superficial thinkers do admit. Too much, we have reason to fear, is attempted on this subject by one effort; and that one not well directed. Under the influence of a thoughtless impulse, early opinions, ancient prejudices and confirmed habits, may for a moment be forgotten; but that impulse once gone, that moment past, they will return in all their wonted force. So far as contending parties unite on principle,—and for an unprincipled union, no man of enlightened piety will plead,—it must be effected by deliberation, and a precise inspection of the ground on which they meet.

Is it not, then, worth while to inquire how far the subject of Psalmody at this day, in our country, tends to divide the *church of God*, “which he has purchased with his own blood?” And to whatever extent it may produce an effect so unhappy, should

not the most effectual remedy be speedily applied? Let none say that this is only one point, in which some sections of the great community of Christians disagree. Though it be but one point, it is a very important one. And is not a single point of union, fairly gained, of much consequence? The more numerous the points of contact, in principle and in practice, the more strong is the spiritual edifice of the house of God. The man who has observed with attention the progress of religious contentions, knows well that discord in a single article tends to alienate the minds of the parties at issue upon others, more than would otherwise be the case. And he knows but little of the structure of the human mind who needs to be informed that concession in one point at issue prepares to mitigate the demands in others that are litigated. Should not then, as far as proper, the experiment be made in this case? Should it succeed, how noble would be the triumph over the unaccommodating and arrogant spirit of party! more worthy of memorial, than those victories that are recorded in the blood of thousands. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city."

Admit, for a moment, that it is a narrow prejudice which makes some more than hesitate to use, in solemn acts of worship, a hymn of human composure; still it must be granted, that their preference of a scripture song is not marked by what deserves the name of crime. It corrupts no ordi-

nance of God. You, indeed, may not perceive any just cause for our scrupulosity; but you can have no objection to join in our devotions. We have, however, objections against uniting in yours; objections which a high-handed practice is not calculated to obviate, in a manner which reflecting Christians can approve.

In moments of devout reflection, the man of piety will approve of that course which, on proper grounds, most effectually tends to unite the followers of the Lamb. Whatever in his conduct has a contrary tendency, will, one day, call up the bitterest regret. Why, then, in the use of a freedom, (if such it be) certainly not necessary to your spiritual growth, banish from your solemn assemblies any who love the Redeemer's name? Or, if there, why impose on him the hard alternative of wounding his own mind, or of keeping silence, in this interesting part of social devotion? This would be, with a witness, to destroy the harmony of Zion. Rather let us endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* If the exclusion of modern hymns, and the restoration of inspired songs, be the

* Eph. iv. 3—Is not this scripture frequently misunderstood and incorrectly applied? *Unity* and *peace* are chimed over without regarding their characteristics. "By the *unity of the Spirit*, we are to understand not only a spiritual unity, but also a unity of sentiments, desires, and affections, such as is worthy of and springs from the Spirit of God."—*Clarke*.

Union in falsehoods and contradictions, is not intended by the apostle.

price of union, among any of the friends of the Redeemer, let that price without delay be given. I plead for this, as one important step toward a permanent accommodation of differences among the Christians of our country.

Will you, then, *can* you, ye friends of concord, refuse this? While in the name of God you plead for union, while you adduce from the gospel page, and urge with an eloquence almost more than human, those holy motives, so well adapted to soothe, to repose every turbulent emotion of the mind, and to enlist all the better affections of the heart upon your side,—*dare* you, with all those accents of peace on your lips, refuse this offer? Will you, in place thereof, professedly light a torch at the sacred fire of the altar of God, and, carrying it in your hand, kindle in his temple a destructive flame? will you kindle a flame which consumes the bonds of peace, of love, and all that is cheering to the heart, leaving to the view the cheerless prospect of desolations? For, when angry passions take the place of holy zeal, confusion that of order, or form that of life, *ICHABOD, the glory is departed*, may be inscribed on the doors of our sanctuaries. That an unaccommodating spirit, productive of such consequences, prevails at this day, I cannot easily persuade myself to believe. I shall therefore continue to hope, that no measure consistent with the purity and order of the church, shall be left untried, to accelerate among her sons a happy unanimity. A brief

review of opinions and practices, ancient and modern, on the subject of psalmody, may be interesting to some; and, it is believed, will be subservient to the proposed end,—uniformity in this part of sacred worship, and an approximation towards that oneness, so desirable in the church of God.

This oneness, it is too well known, cannot now be found. While in some things gaining, yet in purity, in consistency, in firmness, and in elevation of character, the churches generally, for more than a hundred and fifty years past, have been losing ground. To be more than convinced of this unpleasant fact, the mind has only to glance at their history. They are greatly broken into fragments. And even in those sections that profess union, the cohesive principle acts with a too feeble influence on their constituent parts. Their principles, their forms and matter of worship, are discordant. This is remarkably the case in that interesting service,—psalmody—which, of all others on earth, most resembles the employment of those perfect spirits who, in unison, strike the harp of glory before the throne of God. Cast your eyes over the several churches; listen to their song: it is the confusion of Babel! What thoughtful Christian has not felt and deplored this evil? Amidst all this accumulation of modern hymns, under which our presses and our shelves are groaning, and the public mind confounded, no rallying point can be found, where the redeemed of the Lord may unite

in public praise.—But the thought is painful; let it, at present, be no further pursued.

It is, nevertheless, a cheering reflection, that the articles of faith on which the sections of the spiritual empire of our Lord, most remote from each other, agree, are very numerous and very important; and in the prosperity of that empire of which they are *fellow citizens*, they have a common interest. That there are jarring views among them, on a few *important* points, is matter of poignant sorrow; for, in their number, there is no mind so perverted, as to rejoice in the divisions of Zion; no heart so hard, as not to relent at the signs of alienated affections among her sons. Defective in duty must he also be esteemed, who, in his proper place, attempts not to heal those wounds, and to harmonize those affections. Success in such an undertaking is not hopeless. These relentings, these numerous and important points of agreement, the common interest of saints in the progress of *truth and peace*, give assurance of an ultimate triumph.

Let not, then, the infidel rejoice in our unhappy discords. He and his companions, too, have their wars; and they maintain them without a heart. The sons of Zion are friends to truth; children of the same family, they touch with freedom each other's mistakes, they reprove with an affectionate heart, and love as brethren still. They well understand the worth of that compliment, which is couched under a manly appeal to consistency on a

point at issue. Differences can never be removed unless they occupy a share of thought, and find a place in free and meek discussion. Discussion, to rise above chicanery, must be plain; to be useful, it must be meek. The result of an opinion is not always seen by its advocate; and when disavowed, though it belong to his system, should not be imputed to the man. And, for that liberality which, under the shield of venerated names, would save from exposure sentiments or practices of evil tendency, I know you are not the advocates.

Regardless, then, of the charge of *bigotry*,—a vulgar term, ill defined, and successively applied to all on this side the realms of absolute skepticism, and from which I shall be freed by your award; as well as from the imputation of violating the law of charity, a lovely term and lovelier grace; a term, however, which, from lack of knowledge of its import, is often pressed into many an unholy service, uncongenial with its nature,—I proceed in my discussion, after adverting to an idea, a mistaken idea indeed, but one which in some circles is used with considerable address, and not without effect. It is this; that the regard shown to the subject advocated in these sheets, is a prejudice, originating in foreign attachments, and is fostered by *transatlantic* partialities. You, brethren, know this to be a mistake; and through you it may be well to correct it.

To say, indeed, that you and I do not cherish,

with kind respect, the memory of the Calvins and the Bezas, the Luthers and the Melancthons, of continental Europe, would betray ungrateful affectation. To disavow a veneration for the Wickliffes, the Knoxes, Buchanans, Wisharts, Cranmers, Rutherfords, Renwicks and Owens, of Great Britain, would be to falsify some of the best affections of our hearts. And as long as the union of pre-eminent talent with piety of the first order, shall be venerable in the estimate of man, so long shall homage be paid to the Westminster divines, and their memory be kindly cherished, and their labours duly prized. And notwithstanding the slander and the infamy which an ungracious policy has attached to the Emerald Isle, our hearts refuse to disregard the memory or the works of her Ushers and her Boyles, her Berkeleys, her Lelands and Magees. But still we demand credit for our tenderest affections being *cisatlantic*; and certainly, so far as we have national partiality, it is of American growth. While we would duly estimate foreign genius, literature and piety, and give them credit for our drafts upon their stores, it is not with less heart that we recognise the luminaries of America. It is with a just pride we can boast of our Mathers and our Edwardses, with a constellation of others, whose beams not only dissipate the gloom of our wilderness, but add to the splendour of European light: yet still, our faith and our devotions must not be subjected to any, nor to all of

these; before the authority of Heaven, and to that alone, in matters of religion, are we permitted to bow.

But after all, it is hard to see how the preference of psalms given by the inspiration of God, to the productions of an English poet, can be, even *apparently*, placed to the account of foreign partiality. Let the idea of a local religion, whether European or American, be far from our minds. The religion of the Bible is adapted to every province of God's empire in this world. Instead, then, of *Americanizing* religion, as some idly talk, or accommodating its substance and its forms to every impulse of popular prejudice, let it be our care and our endeavour, in our respective departments, that the national character be stamped with the image of the lively oracles of the God of truth.

Trusting, brethren, that among the very numerous and greatly important objects which solicit your attention, and occupy your time, some interval of leisure and of seriousness will permit the subject of these letters to come before you; and when such a season shall occur, not to these letters,—for that is not hoped,—but to their *subject*, do I beg your respectful attention. And whatever may be the consequence of your inquiry, we know, that on this point, no discrepant opinion shall be permitted to break in upon the charities of social life. Those charities we feel, and their exercise is enjoined by our blessed religion. This exercise,

while we deplore sentiments of unhappy tendency, and condemn practices which we cannot approve, teaches us to admit the evidence of motives that mitigate their criminality, and to rejoice in the virtues that recommend the man.

LETTER II.

ANCIENT HISTORY OF PSALMODY.

REMARKS—CHARACTER OF THE AGE OF THE FATHERS—TRUE HISTORY OF PSALMODY IN THE EARLY AGES—PLINY—TERTULLIAN — JEROME — CYRIL — AUGUSTINE — CASSIAN — CHRYSOSTOM — APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS—OTHERS—REMARKS.

DEAR BRETHREN:—When engaged in the field of controversy, every weapon, too often irrespective of its merits, that seems to promise aid in bringing the contest to a desired issue, is, with eagerness, grasped by the contending parties. Hence, in matters of public dispute, they are disposed along with other devices to magnify the numbers that give countenance to their cause, forgetting that in morals and religion the word of God is “our all-sufficient rule, and not the sentiments of any number of fallible men: so that in fact they have sometimes been found right,

who have seemed not only to have all the world, but almost all the church against them.”*

In matters of dispute, the antiquity of an opinion or practice is frequently deemed of weight in conducting to a proper decision. The wisdom of ancient times, it is said, must be revered. In the concerns of religion, there is a charm in antiquity not easily broken. With ancient usage, men are prone to associate the infallibility of the Apostolic age, and, gratuitously, suppose the fathers of a distant time more pious, as well as better acquainted with the practice which was regulated by the authority of inspiration, than those of modern days. It is not my intention to detract any thing from either the reputation or authority which the days of the Fathers can justly claim. It will, however, be found with most of the ancients, what is true of not a few of our modern friends,—that as our acquaintance advances, our veneration diminishes.

The truth is, fifty years after the death of the Apostles had not passed by, when the church they had planted with so much purity, and fostered with so much care, exhibited an aspect very different from what it did before. The historian Hegesippus, of the second century, pronounced the virgin purity of the church to have been confined to the Apostolic age. “Monstrous attempts were made, in that century, to reconcile falsehood with truth,

* Dr. Thomas Scott.

light with darkness.”* In this age originated a bewildering mysticism, an idle monkish seclusion from the relations and duties of active life, and a multiplication of superstitious innovations, which cast a veil of darkness over the truth, substituting for the simplicity of the gospel an unseemly mixture of truth and error. Jerome, of the fourth century testifies that the “primitive church was tainted with gross errors while the Saviour’s blood was yet warm in Judea.” In the following periods the depravity increased. God, indeed, had still his hidden ones, and in their hearts and hands his own cause was preserved; yet the picture of the times is drawn, on the page of history, in dark colours. “There was no charity in works, no discipline in manners.” The practice of such periods can go but a little way in the settlement of controversies respecting divine institutions. For satisfaction, as to the appointments of God, we must rest, not on the practice of the Fathers, but on the records of inspired truth. Keeping this in recollection, it may, nevertheless, be interesting to know their matter and modes of worship. And as a somewhat imposing display of research into the early practice of the church, on the subject of Psalmody, has by various writers been made, it may not be inexpedient to inquire, how far their representations of that practice and the inferences they drew from it, are entitled to our confidence.

* Mosheim, i. 174.

In the previous letter it has been intimated, that, on the subject of the church's Psalmody, opinions have been expressed and practices authorized, which have, especially in the United States, given occasion to controversy among Christians. The introduction, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, of an *Imitation* of the Book of inspired Psalms, accompanied by hymns of mere human composure, into the public worship of the church, and the *reasons* of their introduction, in place of the inspired songs of Zion; calculated, as was foreseen, to banish, by supplanting, those inspired songs from the public Psalmody of the house of God, gave occasion to much dissatisfaction in the several departments of the great Presbyterian family. In vindication of this innovation of a new collection of sacred songs in place of those given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, various writers appeared as advocates.*

* Of these the Rev. James Latta, D. D., a gentleman of reputation as a scholar and divine, was among the first and ablest. His "Discourse on Psalmody" was extensively read. To it we may repeatedly refer. This production was accompanied, or followed, by others, such as the "Discourse" on the same subject by the Rev. Mr. Freeman, and another by the Rev. Mr. Black, carrying out the leading thoughts of Dr. L. At a later period, on the same subject appeared "The Science of Praise," by the Rev. Mr. Baird; and still later, "Strictures on an Apology for the Book of Psalms," by the Rev. Henry Ruffner, and "Hints on the Church's Psalmody," printed in Carlisle, Pa., but anonymous. In another field of controversy, since that time, the reputed author of these "Hints" has had some notoriety.

The positions of the author of the "Discourse on Psalmody," both as to the facts of history and the principles of his subject, will be understood by the following statements, in pp. 76, 77. They are as follow:

"It may be proper to lay before our readers some account of the time and circumstances in which the Psalms of David were first introduced into the Christian church. We have already said they were not in use for the first three centuries. They were introduced at Antioch, in the time of Leontius. Flavian and Diodorus, two persons, who had not attained to any ecclesiastical dignity, but had great influence among the people on account of their sanctity, were the first who made this innovation. They divided the choirs of singers at Antioch into two parts, and gave them the Psalms of David to sing alternately, or by turns. This usage first began at Antioch, spread every where, says Theodoret, and came abroad into all parts of the world. And it is no wonder that it spread speedily and extensively in the fourth century, an age devoted to Arianism. It must have been highly pleasing, to those who had embraced or patronised that heresy, among whom was the Emperor Constantius himself." "It had the most effectual and

Both of the latter productions, and especially the "Hints," were manifestly written in a state of mental excitement, badly qualifying for a serious, candid, and fair discussion of an important subject. They, of course, having nothing new in way of argument, may now, as formerly, be left unnoticed.

immediate tendency to silence those Psalms and Hymns which were sung in honour of Jesus Christ, and which were the great objects which those heretics abhorred and opposed to the utmost." In a previous part of the same page our author had affirmed of such a measure,—the use of the Psalms of David—that "It decided clearly in favour of that tenet of Arianism, that divine worship was to be paid only to the Father, and so had a direct tendency, so far as that part of worship went, to make heresy triumphant." He continues: "Thus we have seen by what authority the Psalms of David have been introduced into the Christian church, and we know by what authority they have been continued in it, to the exclusion of an evangelical Psalmody. In both cases the authority has been entirely human. Divine institution and appointment cannot be pleaded with any plausibility, either from reason or Scripture."

Such, as to the introduction of the Bible Psalm Book,—inspired Psalms,—into the Psalmody of the Christian church, and their character and tendency, being the views of our author, we find them amply illustrated in the course of his discussion. Without taking notice of all, we refer, as specimens of his opinions upon the subject, to a few of his other pages. Thus he gives us to understand his own persuasion to be—

"That the whole worship of the Old Testament was conducted in the *name of the Lord Jesus*, and

that the songs of praise and thanksgiving especially under that dispensation, were expressly offered up to the Father, through Christ, are things which *can never be proved*, and the *very reverse of them all* appears to be the truth." Preface, p. 7. When we sing the Bible Psalms, according to our author, we "substitute David for the Messiah, the law for the gospel." This he says "in fact is the case when we sing of the actions, sufferings, victories, or exaltation of David, instead of those of our great High Priest and Captain of salvation." *Ibid.* p. 11. And again: "It is no wonder that that part of our devotion, which should be the most lively of all, is found to be destitute of proper spirit and fervour, when we do not offer it up to God through that new and living way which he has consecrated for us—when we pay no proper regard to the great *High Priest over the house of God.*" *Ibid.* p. 12. "If we were to adhere strictly to the Old Testament Psalmody, we cannot be said to do any thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, much less to give thanks unto God and the Father, by him. No mention is therein made of the Father, as a distinct and proper object of our devotion, nor of the Son, as being the appointed way of our access to him." P. 29. "It is manifest from the scriptures, that the Old Testament church had no access to God but through priests and sacrifices." Pref. p. 7. "Whether these psalms (1 Cor. xiv. 26) were the effect of previous study and inspi-

ration united, or of immediate suggestion, they were *certainly not designed* to attach the converts to the gospel to the religion of the Jews, or to inspire them with veneration and respect for the psalms of David." P. 42. Of their use in the Church, "we hear nothing for the three first centuries." Pp. 42—55.

Others, of less ability, about the same time and at a later day, as stated in the margin, followed in the same track of our author, referring substantially to the same historical records, and agreeing with him in his estimate of the scripture psalms; the index to which estimate had been previously furnished by Dr. Watts.

The results of these historical details found in this "Discourse," and in what accompanied or followed it, may be reduced to these positions: *First*, That during the first three centuries of one era, hymns of human composition constituted the *whole* matter of the church's psalmody;* and *secondly*, That the book of Psalms was not introduced into the Christian church as the matter of her praise, till error and heresy, to which its introduction was subservient, boldly attempted, in the fourth century, to veil the divine glories of the Redeemer.† And *thirdly*, That this divinely inspired book is without authority in the Psalmody of the Christian church, and is utterly unfit to be used in that sa-

* Discourse, p. 76.

† *Ibid.* p. 77.

cred ordinance of religious worship.* A brief examination of these positions will dispose of this part of the subject now before us. And before we proceed farther, two remarks may be made. We, in this place, refer to this Discourse, chiefly, because as it is the ablest discussion on that side of the question, it is still handed about to confirm the doubting. It ought likewise to be noted, that the facts of the existence of hymns of human composition, at an early day, and their use in the church, are with us no matter of dispute. In the first three editions of the Apology, these facts were admitted in express terms, and we again repeat our language, "That they"—hymns of human composure—"were frequently used in public worship, we need not doubt. That many of them were intended to honour, and as many others both calculated and intended to dishonour, the Redeemer of men, neither the opinions of the times, nor the characters of the prime actors of those days forbid us to suppose."

But when all this is granted, I assert, without any apprehension of well supported contradiction, that there is no ground to believe, that inspired songs were not used from the beginning in the church of God; or that uninspired hymns were *exclusively* adopted, or at all adopted, with *divine approbation*, in place of the book of Psalms. It is a specimen of bad reasoning to conclude that, because such hymns were admitted by worshipping

* Discourse, p. 77.

† *Ibid.* pp. 48, 77.

assemblies, the admission and use of them were of divine institution.* Of no fairer character is the conclusion, that the admission of these proves the unfitness and rejection of David's inspired odes. He must likewise be hard pushed, who concludes that because Arians opposed the psalms that were sung in honour of Christ, the orthodox did not retain those indited by the Spirit of God. And surely the candour is not greatly to be admired, which repeatedly more than intimates that the friends of the use of the inspired book of Psalms, in Psalmody, are hostile to the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus;† and as little accordant with reverence for the oracles of God is the allegation, that the use of any portion of them tends to the dishonour of the Saviour of the Church. But such allegations, in the present instance, we would ascribe to an undue ardour of zeal in an unhappy cause, rather than to habitual conviction of judgment. But let us not anticipate. We turn to the witnesses adduced in

* The Episcopalian, in vindicating his views of ecclesiastical order, draws largely upon the practice of the second, third, and fourth centuries. The argument from this practice is of little weight with the Presbyterian; yet the argument from this source, in favour of Prelacy, is at least as strong, if not stronger, than that of the Presbyterian, in favour of a human Psalmody. That the worth of this kind of argument, in the one case, can be understood, and not in the other, is an instance, among many others, of human imperfection, and admonishes us to beware of, and to examine well, a favourite hypothesis.

† Discourse, pp. 48, 77.

support of the averments made, and their testimony shall be briefly considered.

The witnesses are Pliny, the Roman governor of Bythinia; Tertullian, as reported by Basnage; Origen, Eusebius, and Mosheim; together with the supposed implications of the action of certain councils of later ages. The points of inquiry will not be forgotten: The exclusive use of hymns of human composure during the first three centuries; and the introduction of the book of Psalms, not till the fourth century, and then by Arian heretics.

The first witness adduced is the junior Pliny. He was born at Como, in Italy, A. D. 62, and died A. D. 113; and, through various grades of high office, he reached that of the Proconsulate of Bythinia, under the Emperor Trajan, and for a time was engaged in carrying into effect the imperial edicts against Christians. He is celebrated as a fine writer and an eloquent lawyer, the associate and friend of the illustrious Tacitus. His testimony of the Christian character, being that of an enemy, is of great value. His correspondence on the subject with the Emperor occurred, perhaps, in A. D. 103. His testimony as to the facts stated, whether obtained from apostate Christians, or tortured confessors and martyrs, is worthy of credit. What is it? Besides their refusal to worship idols,—

“The whole of their fault or error is this—that they used to meet together on a stated day—the sabbath—at an early hour, and, *Carmenque Christo,*

quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem—to repeat or sing among themselves alternately an ode to Christ as to God; and by oath to bind themselves not to commit any wickedness, not to be guilty of theft, robbery, or adultery, nor to falsify their word," &c. The weight of this testimony rests on the terms, *carmen dicere, to recite an ode or prayer*. The word *carmen* signifies "any set form of words, whether in prose or verse,"* and *dicere*, to speak—not *canere*, to sing—is of very general import. The words, correctly enough, might be rendered—"Among themselves, one after another, they were accustomed to address a prayer to Christ, as to God." But having no disposition to dwell on mere verbiage, we shall not object to the version usually given. They uttered a hymn or an ode to Christ, as to God. We insist, however, that had the Bythinian Christians recited or chanted the second, the eighth, the forty-fifth, the seventy-second, the hundred and second, or the one hundred and tenth psalm, they *would literally* have addressed Christ as God. In any one of these sacred songs, and in many others, they would have celebrated the glories of the Redeemer's character. Compare psalms xlv., xcvii., cii., cx., with Heb. i. 1—9, and this truth, to the reader, will be evident, as it was to the Apostle Paul. The fact is remarkable, that the Apostle, in conducting his argument in favour of the personal glories and

* As *Lex horrendi carminis erat*. Livy 1, 26. *A law of terrible import*.—Adam.

Mediatorial exaltation of Messiah, against the false views of his countrymen, confirms and illustrates it by the authority of the book of psalms. In every ode of that sacred collection to which he turned, he found the Son of God, the Saviour of men, either securing, possessing, or dispensing the blessings of his kingdom. If the Spirit of God taught an Apostle to find his Redeemer in them, may we not inquire,—By what spirit are they instructed, who say he is not to be found in those sacred psalms? and affirm that their use is not honourable to his cause; “it deprives him of divine honour.”* *Believe not every spirit.*

Irenæus, who had been instructed by a disciple of the Apostle John, in proving the Deity of Jesus Christ, urged the testimony of the 45th psalm. The facts related by Pliny he learnt from Christians, or those who had been professedly such, upon their examination at his bar; and not from his own inspection of their psalm book. Of that it is not likely he had much knowledge; and whether it was from the book of Psalms or not, he certainly does not say.

What then, is the argument? Pliny says the Bythinian Christians addressed themselves to Christ, as to God, in a poetic composition,—*carmen*—therefore, they did not sing the inspired songs of scripture, but hymns of human composition! Had they not inspired songs? Why not sing one of

* Discourse, p. 77.

them? The testimony of the Proconsul of Bythia gives no countenance to the modern hymn book, as set up against that of inspiration.

The next witness brought upon the stand is Tertullian, as reported by Basnage. Tertullian, a native of Carthage, belonged to the second and third centuries. Educated a lawyer, he ultimately became a distinguished Presbyter. He was a man of talents, zealous, bold, and active. With a mind not very well balanced, he was severe in manners, and inclined to superstition. He was, in his time, the chief Latin writer in the cause of Christianity. His works still furnish important material to the historian. We shall attend to this African father himself, in the passage of his Apology for Christianity, to which reference on the subject before us has been made. It will be observed that the description is not of the regular public worship of God, but of occasional entertainments where devotional exercises were performed—very probably the *Agapæ* of that time—the “love feasts,” which, on account of their great disorders, were afterwards abolished. Of this feast, or supper, Tertullian says,

“Since the occasion of the entertainment is a worthy one, judge of the order of its management, as regards religious duty. It allows of nothing low or unbecoming. Before a prayer is offered to God, none is seated at table. A sufficiency is taken to satisfy those who eat, and the quantity

drunk is what delicacy and propriety admit. Thus satisfied, they bear in mind that by them, in the night, God is to be worshipped. They converse as those who know that they are heard of the Lord. Having washed their hands, and the lights being furnished, every one, as he may be able, is invited in their midst, either from the *holy scriptures*, or from the resources of his own mind, to sing praise to God.”*

What is the amount of the testimony of this father? It is this: At certain meetings, not of divine appointment, Christians were wont to assemble and temperately, but plentifully, to eat and drink—most probably the love-feast, subsequently the occasion of much scandal. With their social eating and drinking, they connected the religious exercises of prayer and praise. They, too, conversed together with seriousness. Each one was called upon individually to take a part, especially in praise, and in the exercise to appear in the middle of the company. It was an *individual* action

* Si honesta causa est convivii, reliquum ordinem disciplinæ æstimate qui sit, de religionis officio. Nihil vilitatis, nihil immodestiæ admittit. Non prius discumbitur, quam oratio ad Deum prægustetur. Editur quantum esurientes cupiunt; bibitur quantum pudicis est utile. Ita saturantur, ut qui meminerint etiam per noctem adorandum Deum sibi esse. Ita fabulantur, ut qui sciant Dominum audire post aquam manualementem et lumina, ut quisque de scripturis sanctis vel de proprio ingenio potest, provocatur in medium Deo canere.—*Tertul. Apol. Opera*, p. 32.

—quisque, *every one*—and he was allowed to find the matter of his praise in *the holy scriptures*, inspired songs, or in the resources of his own mind—*de proprio ingenio*. In all this we have nothing of the stated ordinances of the church's public worship; while there is sufficient indication of an intermingling of superstitious rites with religious observances. But it is affirmed that hymns of human composure, and not inspired songs, were used by the Christians of that age; and Tertullian is here adduced in proof of this, while he tells us, in the instance given, that they drew their songs from *the holy scriptures*, as well as from their own genius. The existence and use of hymns of human composure we have already admitted. The use of scripture songs, before the fourth century, Tertullian asserts. But those who take the other side of the question, on this testimony of the Carthaginian Presbyter, reason thus: Tertullian informs us that, in his day, on certain occasions, some Christians in praising God derived the matter of their praise either from the holy Scriptures, or from their own ingenuity; therefore scripture *songs* were not then in use; but hymns of human composition *alone!* Such are the premises, such the conclusions, and such is the proof of the positions assumed. Tertullian, however, does not reason thus.

The next witness is Origen. He was a native of Egypt, the co-temporary of Tertullian, greatly distinguished by his talents, learning, labours, and

sufferings, as well as for his errors. The testimony of this distinguished man, now adduced on the subject of Psalmody, is very brief. It is simply the statement of the French historian, Basnage, representing Origen as exhorting the people "to strive by their hymns, by their psalms, by their spiritual songs, crying to God that they might obtain the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Of this fact we have no reason to doubt; and, as is alleged, probably, that father referred to the apostolic injunction—Col. iii. 16. But what does this prove? Do not the sacred scriptures contain psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs? This is now admitted by all? Did not the apostle refer to those inspired compositions? Or were hymns of human invention used by the church in the apostolic age? The proof! Origen perhaps meant what Paul meant; but did Paul intend mere human compositions, to the exclusion of the Bible psalms? Of this again. Origen proves nothing for the divine authority of the modern hymn book; and less, if possible, for the exclusion of the book of inspired odes from the church's Psalmody.

But we are referred to Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history. This distinguished man was born at Cæsarea, the theatre of his actions, and of his elevation, in A. D. 270, and lived till about 340. His writings were very numerous. He was a learned man, and an able ecclesiastic. The friendship between him and Constantine the Great appears to

have been mutually sincere and ardent. Their intercourse was frequent and confidential. His orthodoxy however was doubted, and some of his principles, as a historian and moralist, have been subjected to animadversion.*

His testimony on the subject of Psalmody is found in his account of the action of the Council at Antioch, in the case of the heresy of Paulus of Samosata, an opposer of the truth of the Deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The verity of the history is not disputed. Paulus was a heretic, a vain, arrogant, and, it seems, an impious and immoral man. The direct and great object of the council appears to have been his conviction as a heretic, and his degradation from ecclesiastical office. The reference to Psalmody is not as a specific charge, but incidental, as a proof of his hostility to the Godhead of Christ. The reference intimates what no one denies—the existence of hymns of human composition—but proves nothing as to the divine authority for their use in place of Bible songs, and as little for the expulsion of the book of Psalms from, or its unsuitableness to be used in, the Psalmody of the church. Paulus refused to celebrate the deity of Christ in a modern hymn, but had hymns composed, and sung in the church, in his own praise and in his own presence, representing him as more than human.† For his denial of the Godhead of

* Life of Eusebius by Valesius.

† Neander, Hist. ii. 604.

the Saviour, for his impieties and immoralities, he was excommunicated. But what does all this say as to the *exclusive* use of modern hymns? the unfitness of inspired Psalms? or for their exclusion from the matter of the church's praise? Nothing, nothing whatever. But why pursue the subject? Upon other themes those writers would not reason as is done in this case. And why continue to give currency to such conclusions upon such evidence?

The early existence of such hymns as are pleaded for, we admit. A careful examination will afford reason to believe that, in the second and third centuries, they were the fugitive productions of individuals, privately used, and without any special authority, at length finding their way into the public assembly. This was after the age of the apostles, and in a period when the innovations of superstition advanced with rapid steps, laying the foundation and gathering the material of the dark and unsightly superstructure of the Man of sin and Son of perdition. It, too, will appear to be more than probable that the innovation was first made in favour of error and heresy by the enemies of evangelical truth. There is not a particle of evidence to induce a belief of the existence in the church during the apostolic age of such hymns.

Bardesanes, a native of Ædessa, a man of mind, of a Gnostic sect, and of course a zealous opponent of the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, in

the second century, was among the first, if not the first, that was distinguished for the composition of new hymns. The Gnostic doctrines were poetic, and they were made popular, and widely extended by the *hymns* and *odes* of this heretical poet, and those of his more distinguished son, Harmonius, who, with his father, espoused the same bad cause. Bardesanes “IMITATED David, that he might be adored and recommended by similar honours. For this purpose he composed 150 psalms.”* Into those psalms and hymns he infused his corrupt and mystic doctrines, rendering them agreeable to the taste of his readers “by the charms of novelty, and the embellishments of oriental style.” And it is added, “Thus the Syrian church was in danger of being overflowed with Gnostic errors through the mighty vehicle of song.”

It was in the following age that Paulus of Samosata, at Antioch, opposed the divinity of Christ, and rejected every thing calculated to discountenance his heresy, while he had hymns composed and sung in his own praise, and in the swollen language of the times, was “called an angel come down from heaven.”† We envy not the critical judgment, nor can we admire the religious taste of the men who, in the absence of all adequate evidence, can suppose

* Ephræm the Syrian, as quoted by the Princeton Repertory of 1829, in an interesting article on “The sacred poetry of the early Christians,” p. 530.

† Neander, Hist. ii. 604.

that that heretic, to suit his own purpose, introduced inspired Psalms. His apparent self-contradiction in objecting to some hymns as modern, while he admitted those in praise of himself, which were equally new, is not of difficult explanation. Heretics are seldom consistent with themselves, and the hymns of such poets as Bardesanes of a previous age,—a professed Christian but opposer of Christ's religion,—which circulated extensively in the Syrian church, might be referred to, and by him be used, as ancient, compared with the more orthodox odes of a later date.

The fair character of the hymns reputed as orthodox, of which any thing is known, from the paucity of their number, can, with no certainty, be ascertained. The testimony of the votaries of superstition in their favour, says very little for them, as meeting the demands of a pure worship, or of the sanction of them by divine authority. In these respects, such as have come down to us are calculated to make upon our minds no favourable impression. Ephræm, the Syrian, who flourished some two hundred years after Bardesanes, was the most noted and celebrated as an orthodox hymnologist. And what was his character? What the character of his hymns? The following extract gives a sample of his orthodoxy; it is taken from his prayer to Basil, appended to his funeral oration upon that father, one of the canonized saints of the Romish calendar, and one of their demon mediators;

and never did popish votary address him more devoutly in prayer than this Ephræm Syrus, the most famed hymnologist—orthodox hymnologist—of the early church, who is still celebrated as such in our own day by orthodox men! This Ephræm thus addresses the lately-departed spirit of Basil:—

“Intercede for me, a very miserable man; and recall me by thy intercessions, O Father; thou who art strong, pray for me who am weak; thou who art cheerful, for me who am heavy; thou who art wise, for me who am foolish. Thou who hast treasured up a treasure of all virtues, be a guide to me, who am empty of every good work.” At the commencement of his oration on the forty martyrs, he invokes them, saying—“Help me, O ye saints, with your intercessions; and, O ye blessed, with your holy prayers.” And the dead mother of one of those martyrs he thus addresses:—“I entreat thee, O holy, faithful, and blessed woman, pray for me *to the saints*, saying; ‘Intercede, ye that triumph in Christ, for the little and miserable Ephræm, that he may find mercy, and by the grace of Christ may be saved.’” And again, “Now, ye most holy men and glorious martyrs of God, help me, a miserable sinner, &c. I have endeavoured with the whole affection and desire of my mind, to recreate your fathers and brothers, kindred and relations. For behold they sing, and with exultation and jubilee glorify God, who has crowned your virtues, by set-

ting on your most sacred heads incorruptible and celestial crowns; they with exceeding joy stand about the *sacred reliques* of your martyrdoms, wishing for a blessing, and desiring to bear away holy *medicines*, both for the *body* and the *mind*. I beseech you, stand before the throne of the divine Majesty for me, Ephræm, a vile and miserable sinner, that *by your prayers I may deserve* to obtain salvation." He had just before said to those departed spirits: "Bestow a blessing on me, who, though weak and feeble, having received strength by your *merits* and *intercessions*, have, with the whole devotion of my mind, *sung a hymn to your praise and glory before your holy reliques.*"* Such was the character of the most distinguished of the orthodox hymnologists of the early church, and without any warning, recommended to our regard as an example to be followed, and as a witness of the divine authority in the church for the use of such hymns!

As this celebrated Ephræm was a worshipper of departed spirits before their relics, by the singing, of hymns to their praise, and by praying *to* them; so he prayed *for* them, and composed orthodox hymns, in which those prayers were expressed. Thus in a funeral hymn, on occasion of the decease of a deacon, he sings—

* Sir I. Newton's Obs. on Daniel. Prot. Q. Rev. vol. i., 245, 246.

Behold our brother is departed
 From this abode of wo :
 Let us pray in his departure
 That his guide may be propitious.
 Beatify him in the mansions above.
 May his eyes behold thy grace.
 Feed him with thy lambs.*

Ephræm saw the power of poetry and music in the promotion of the heresies of the Gnostic school, of which the Arian faction was a branch. His superstitions, mingled with some orthodoxy, he recommended by the charms of those fascinating arts. He is said "to have borrowed the polish of his armour from the skill of his opponents, the melody of his versification from the mellifluous strains of" the son of Bardesanes. "He adopted the music of the popular heresy, and accommodated his measures to them." In his hymns, as in his prayers, he might mingle his praises of the Redeemer as God, with those addressed to saints, and thus at once bear witness to the divinity of Christ and the saintship of demons. Like such hymns, in those days, the sign of the cross was introduced in company with an endless train of relics, to testify to the religion of Christ, as the image of Mary with the child Jesus in her arms was adopted and made available as a testimony in the Nestorian controversy.† The entire history of those ages shows

* Bib. Rep. for 1829. We omit the *praises* of the deacon, and give the prayers for him.

† Mosheim.

the great and lamentable extent to which the novelties of a low superstition had taken the place of the truth and purity of the religion of Christ. The multiplication of fugitive hymns greatly ministered to this. "Sectaries and heretical parties often had recourse to church Psalmody, as a means of giving spread to their own peculiar religious opinions." Hence, "All those songs which had not been for a long time in use in the church, were particularly liable to suspicion." The evils arising from the multiplication and use of those hymns and short doxologies, which were added to "the Psalms which had been in use from the earliest times," to the serious and reflecting became offensive. "To this practice much opposition was expressed. It was demanded that, in conformity with the ancient usage, nothing should be used in the music of the public worship, but what was taken from the sacred scriptures."* Accordingly the council of Laodicea forbade the introduction into the church of *private* or *unauthorized* Psalms—*ιδιωτικῶν ψαλμῶν*. So the Council of Braga, as shall hereafter be noticed. The manner of the Psalmody had become corrupt as well as the matter. Pambo in Egypt inveighed against the use of theatrical heathen melodies in the Psalmody of the church; so did Isidore of Pelusium. Instead of songs of praise to God, the hymns used by contending parties became the watch-words of faction. "Thus," says the "Biblical Repertory,"—"Thus

* Neander, Hist. ii. 318. Jones on the Canon, i. 60, 61.

one of the most sacred portions of the worship of the church militant, in which it was designed to approximate most closely to the services of the church above, degenerated into the mere watch-word of a party, and the signal for strife and controversy." Unhallowed was the origin and bitter have been the fruits of a departure from the scripture Psalmody.

Of the practice in the Apostolic age there can be little doubt. The Saviour, while yet with his disciples, set them an example, from which they were not likely to depart—The *hallel* was sung by him and them. The proselytes from the house of Israel, usually constituted the nucleus of every church. This the *Acts of the Apostles* abundantly prove. These converts were peculiarly attached to their ancient forms, and to the sacred Books which were so familiar to their minds. Had it been proposed to exclude their inspired songs from their assemblies, and to substitute others of human device in their place, the whole church would have been convulsed. On this point, however, there was no dispute between the Jewish and the Gentile Christian. The singing of the inspired Songs of Zion constituted no part of the yoke of bondage. In the expressions of their holy joy, they were commanded to "sing Psalms." The uniform silence on this subject, the calm in the church respecting it, is proof that all united in the use of scripture Songs. The appeals of the Son of God himself, to the book of Psalms, in proof of his glory, were too

recent to be forgotten—the very frequent appeals of his apostles to these holy hymns in exhibition of his character, too deeply impressed his church, to permit any dispute upon the point. It was not then known, that their use “flattened devotion—made worship dull—darkened their views of God the Saviour, and tended to make heresy triumphant.” No, no; the book of Psalms was then understood, and its power was felt by the church. All that has ever appeared in opposition to this is mere confident assertion, unsupported by any adequate evidence. If there were other than inspired Songs used in the Psalmody of the church, during that age, let some of them be produced, or indubitable evidence of their existence be made appear. This has not yet been done.

With the first century, the last of the apostles had passed away. The church, in the second age, was less pure than in the former. What was her practice, as to Psalmody, in the second century? She used songs of human composition, exclusively, say the patrons of innovation. We have seen a sample of their proof. Let us, however, inquire for ourselves. Whatever in this was the apostolic practice, was most likely to be that of the orthodox, in the period of which we speak. Pliny's letter intimates to us, that Psalmody was a part of stated public worship. His expression intimates, that their *mode* was that of the Jews—*dicere secum invicem*—to sing *alternately*. The remarks before made will

lead us to see, that, if the Bythinian Christians brought in the ancient *mode*, the ancient inspired *song* was much more likely to be retained. That song recognised *Christ as God*. Irenæus, after the example of Paul, defended the divinity of Jesus by the forty-fifth psalm. According to the same, and other examples no less high, he could have argued the same point from many more. That the songs, then, which they used, were those found in the book of God, is an assumption better supported, than the hypothesis of those who take the other side.

Tertullian intimates, that Psalmody was a part of the ordinary worship of the church in his day. He expressly mentions the fact, that in the African church, the 133d Psalm was uniformly used at the administration of the Lord's supper. Nor does he compliment those who only used it at that solemnity.* It would be a novel mode of reasoning, to conclude from this, that no other of the psalms were sung at the sacramental solemnity; and no less arbitrary to assert, that none other of that sacred collection was sung by the church.† We here have proof, that on the most solemn occasion of the

* Hoc tupsallere non facile nosti, nisi quo tempore cum compluribus cœnas.—*Tertul. de Jejun. Op.* 552.

† Some Presbyterian denominations, on sacramental occasions, uniformly sing the 45th or 103d Psalms. Would this fact authorize an historian to state, that they rejected from their Psalmody all the rest?

church's service, the Book of Psalms was employed in the second century; and why not on common occasions? We have no proof that in the stated worship of the church, any other collection was used, or divinely authorized. To assert it, is not to act the part of an enlightened instructor.

We now approach the third century. The state of the church was not better in this, than in the last age. The testimony of history furnishes little light on the practice of this period, as it respects Psalmody. This is the less to be regretted, as we must, after all, have recourse to a 'more sure word of prophecy.' Irenæus, Tertullian, and others, of the preceding century, flourished in the beginning of this. The practice of the last, for aught that appears to the contrary, was the practice of this.

Of the practice of the fourth century we know more. Its writers were more numerous, and more reputable, than those of the third. *Jerome*, of Palestine, "whose learned and zealous labours will hand down," says Mosheim, "his name with honour to the latest posterity," informs us, that the 31st and 45th psalms were sung at the administration of the Lord's supper; as was the 133d psalm, in the second century, according to Tertullian. In this Jerome is supported by *Cyril*, of Jerusalem his cotemporary.* *Augustine*, who in talent and piety was not surpassed by any in his age, testifies to the use of the book of Psalms, in the Psalmody of the

* Catech.

church. It was used by himself in his own church; and, as a thing in course, on one occasion he mentions the singing of the 65th psalm.* That this father, who was deeply versed in the experience of vital godliness, did not think that these songs tended "to flatten devotion," appears from his Confessions. It is remarkable how those pathetic addresses are replenished with the language of the book of Psalms. With pleasure did he remember how, in early life, God taught him by that unequalled system of experimental godliness which it unfolds. "I read," says he, "with pleasure the Psalms of David: the hymns and songs of thy church moved my soul intensely; thy truth was distilled by them into my heart; the flame of piety was kindled, and my tears flowed for joy."† These hymns and songs, as appears from the following book, were no other than those of the Book of Psalms. He relates now, what took place at Milan, under the ministry of *Ambrose*, where he says: "This practice of singing has been of no long standing. It began about the year when Justina persecuted *Ambrose*."‡ It is to this Mosheim adverts, when he incorrectly states, that David's Psalms were introduced *among* the hymns of the church.§ Before this time there was no Psalmody in the west. Again, when *Augustine* speaks of the effects of sa-

* Serm. 10.

† Milner.

‡ Conf. B. 9.

§ Vol. I. 385.

cred music, he owns, "that the infirmity of nature may be assisted in devotion by Psalmody—When I remember my tears of affection, at my conversion under the melody of thy church, with which I am still affected, I acknowledge the utility of the custom." These Psalms he was prepared to vindicate against their revilers, as well as to use them in his church. "One Hilary," says he, "took every opportunity of loading with malicious censures the custom—that *hymns from the Book of Psalms*, should be sung at the altar. In obedience to the commands of my brethren I answered him."* "The Donatists, too," a fiery sect of enthusiasts, "reproached the orthodox," as the same venerable father informs us,† "because they sung with sobriety the divine songs of the prophets, while they (the Donatists) inflamed their minds with the poetic effusions of human genius." His estimate of this Book may be learned from the fact, that, in his last sickness, he had David's penitential Psalms inscribed upon the wall of his chamber. ‡

Athanasius of Alexandria, the correct, bold and suffering witness for orthodoxy, employed the Psalms of David in his church. For this we have the testimony of Augustine. When speaking of the abuse of sacred music, he adds: "Sometimes I could wish all the *melody* of David's Psalms were removed from my ears and those of the church; and

* See Calv. Inst. B. 3, ch. 20. † Epist. 119, tom. 2. ‡ Milner.

think it safer to imitate the plan of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, who directed a method of repeating the Psalms, more resembling pronunciation than music.”*

Let us hear Athanasius himself on this subject. He, comparing the Book of Psalms with other books, thus speaks: “I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these psalms; for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, and the emotions of his soul. To praise and glorify God, he can select a psalm *suited to every occasion*, and thus will find that they were written for him.” And Basil, his cotemporary, says: “The Book of Psalms is a compend of all divinity; a common store of medicine for the soul; a universal magazine of good doctrines, profitable to every one in all conditions.”† This is that Basil of Cæsarea, who nobly stood out against the authority and influence of the Emperor Valens, who wished him to admit the Arians to the communion of his church; and who likewise secured great advantages to the orthodox of Cappadocea, his native state.

That Ambrose used the Book of Psalms is proved by the same testimony. Augustine was himself, for a time, a member of the church in Milan. Thence it spread into all the churches of the west. “The people, says the historian, were much de-

* Conf. B. 10.

† Basil on Psalms, i.

lighted, their zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity was inflamed," &c. The universality of the practice is evinced by the testimony of Jerome, already mentioned. "You could not," he says, "go into the fields but you might hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, and the vine-dresser chanting the Psalms of David."

In the Apostolic Constitutions* we learn that "the women, the children, and the humblest mechanics, could repeat all the Psalms of David; they chanted them at home and abroad; they made them the exercises of their piety and the refreshment of their minds. Thus they had answers ready to oppose temptation, and were always prepared to pray to God, and to praise him, in any circumstance, *in a form of his own inditing.*"

The testimony of *Chrysostom*, the eloquent patriarch of Constantinople, who flourished in this age, is fully in point. He was no enemy to the Godhead of Christ. He ranked high among the orthodox divines of his day. "All Christians," says this first of sacred orators,† "employ themselves in David's Psalms more frequently than in

* Lib. 2, c. 57. The collection of regulations, known under the name of the "Apostolical Constitutions," made its appearance in the fourth century. Though we may justly dispute its apostolical origin, it may be admitted of sufficient authority, as far as it indicates the customs of the third and following century. We see its testimony respecting the use of the Book of Psalms.

† Hom. 6, on Penitence.

any other part of the Old or *New Testament*. The grace of the Holy Ghost hath so ordered it that they should be recited and sung night and day. In the church's vigils, the first, the midst, the last, are David's Psalms. In the morning David's Psalms are sought for; and David is the first, the midst, and the last. At funeral solemnities, the first, the midst, and the last, is David. *Many who know not a letter can say David's Psalms by heart*. In private houses where the virgins spin—in the monasteries—in the deserts, where men converse with God,—the first, the midst, and the last is David. In the night, when men are asleep, he wakes them up to sing; and collecting the servants of God into angelic troops, turns earth into heaven, and of men makes angels, chanting David's Psalms." And on Psalm 145, this illustrious father remarks: "This psalm deserves special attention, for it contains the words which are always sung by those admitted to communion, saying, 'All eyes wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due time;' for he who has been made a child, and partaker of the spiritual table, with propriety praises the Father." And by Cyril we are told that at the communion solemnity they sung together, in Psalm 34th, "Come, taste, and see that the Lord is good," &c.

Whatever may be the reputation of *Cassian*, as to literary attainments, his testimony in matters of fact is not liable to exception. He wrote in the fifth century. In vindicating the religious order,

with which he was connected, he observes,* “The elders have not changed the ancient custom of singing *psalms*. The devotions are performed in the same order as formerly. The *hymns* which it had been the custom to sing at the close of the night vigils, namely, the 50th, 62d, 89th, 148th, &c. *Psalms*, are the same *hymns* which are sung at this day.” Could the singing of the Book of Psalms, had it been a novel practice at that time, have been called an *ancient custom*? Why conclude, when the term *hymn* is found in the writings of the fathers, that a song of human inditing is intended, when we find that the *Psalms of Scripture* are by them denominated *hymns*? But of this anon.

One word more respecting the introduction of the Book of Psalms into the Christian church. It has been very confidently and repeatedly affirmed that it had no place there in the first three centuries; and, that under Arian influence, it was introduced and supported in the fourth and following centuries. These round and unfounded assertions, are fully contradicted by the testimony of Tertullian, of Jerome, of Cyril, of Augustine, of Chrysostom, of Cassian, and of the Apostolic Constitutions. According to all of these, the songs of scripture, from the beginning, were employed in the Psalmody of the church; nor does it appear that at any time, the Arians were the friends

* Lib. iii. cap. 6.

either of their introduction or of their continuance. That Paulus, at Antioch, had hymns sung in his own praise, is admitted; and that, in other places, the orthodox and the Arians separated in singing the psalms, because the latter would have odes conformable to their heresy, is fully known. But as I am aware of no inspired Psalm that is conformable to the denial of the Saviour's deity, I presume they sought their hymns from some other source than the Book of Psalms. Tell us what inspired psalm was suitable to the praise of Paulus, and to the celebration of his heresy?

But were not the Psalms of David first brought into use in the Christian church by Flavian and Diodore, at Antioch? So it has been asserted, but with a remarkable disregard of historical authority or proof. The truth is, the manner of singing, and not the matter sung, is the subject of record, in respect of the church of Antioch, at that time. The notice of the matter of Psalmody is only incidental, but, on that account, not the less important.

Suidas,* on the word *χορος*, *chorus*, informs us that "The choirs of churches were, in the time of Flavian, of Antioch, between A. D. 337 and 404, divided into parts, who sung the Psalms of David alternately; a practice which commenced at Antioch, and thence extended into all parts of the Christian world." Observe, it was not the *singing* of David's Psalms that is then said to have com-

* *Lexicon.*

menced, but the *manner* of singing them. And Flavian and Diodore were not Arians, who, according to Dr. Latta and his friends, were the only patrons of the scripture Psalmody, but the orthodox opposers of Leontius, the Arian bishop of that city.* “These provisions,” says Bingham, “were designed to restore and revive the *ancient Psalmody*, by reducing it to its primitive harmony and perfection.”† There is not the remotest intimation of any change or rejection, as respected the inspired matter of their sacred song.‡

The foregoing statements show that the celebration of the praises of God, in the compositions of inspiration, obtained in Greece, Asia, and Africa, from the beginning, but that it was uniformly and universally practised in the churches in western Europe, is not so clear. On the authority of Augustine, Calvin§ thinks that Psalmody was not general there before the time of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who, under the persecution of the Arians, introduced it into that church; whence it spread into others, in the regions of the west. This fact ac-

* Hooker carries up the practice of singing, *alternately*, the Psalms of David to the days of Ignatius, the disciple and friend of the apostles.—*Eccles. Polit.*

† Antiq. of the Church.

‡ Julian the Apostate, while at Antioch, about A. D. 381, was offended with the Psalmody of the church, and actually punished the Christians there for singing the 68th and 97th Psalms.—*Milner.*

§ Instit. lib. 3, cap. 26.

counts, in a satisfactory manner, for the representation of Mosheim, and others, that in this age the Psalms of David were first introduced as the matter of the church's song. In most of those churches they had hitherto, from obvious causes, been generally destitute of this part of public worship. That was not an age of Bible Societies. Copies of the Scriptures were rare, and a Psalm Book not to be had. The defect was supplied as the Bible was translated into the vernacular tongues.

The subject has, in all ages of the church, claimed her attention; and, whatever unauthorized and restless, or vain individuals might effect, it never was the deliberate opinion of any, capable of consistent reflection, that her songs should, without limitation, be the *spontaneous effusions* of heated affections. The decisions of the council at Laodicea, in A. D. 364, and the second at Braga, in Spain, early in the 7th century, prove the contrary. The former decreed that no unauthorized psalms should be used in the church; the latter prohibited all except those of divine inspiration. These facts, together with Augustine's reply to the revilings of Hilary, and the practice of the orthodox in his day, notwithstanding the reproaches of the raving Donatists, speak a language very different from that of the gentlemen whose representations are now under review.

To these more ancient witnesses for the early and continued use of the inspired book of Psalms,

in the church's Psalmody, we with pleasure add the testimony of distinguished authority of a later date. "Church Psalmody," says the distinguished Neander, "passed over from the synagogue into the Christian church."* And again, speaking of a period subsequent to the age of the apostles, he states that—"Besides the Psalms which had been used from the earliest times, and the short *doxologies* and *hymns* consisting of verses from the holy scriptures, spiritual songs composed by distinguished church teachers, were also introduced among the pieces used for public worship, in the Western church. To the last named practice *much opposition*, it is true, was expressed. It was demanded, that, in conformity with the *ancient usage*, nothing should be used in the music of public worship, but what was taken from the *sacred scriptures*. As sectaries and heretical parties often had recourse to church Psalmody to spread their own religious opinions, all those songs which had not been for a *long time* in use in the church, were particularly liable to suspicion."†

The evils of a spurious Psalmody called for the interposition of ecclesiastical authority. Thus in the fourth century the council of Laodicea decreed that *unauthorized Psalms* ought not to be used in the church;‡ and in the following century, A. D. 561, or 563, the hymnological abuses aroused the opposition of serious and thoughtful men, and called

* Neand. Hist. i. 304.

† Hist. ii. 318.

‡ Ibid.

for ecclesiastical restrictions; and, before the full manifestation of the Man of sin, secured the decree of Braga, forbidding “the introduction of other poetry into the Psalmody of the church, beyond the songs of *canonical scripture* ;” * a decree of Reformation which, under the Antichristian reign in the following century, 633, by the council of Toledo, was set aside.

These historical facts fully sustain all that we have stated on the subject: that the Book of Psalms had its place in the Psalmody of the church from the beginning; that the modern hymn was an innovation; that it was productive of mischief; and that the innovation met with individual and ecclesiastical opposition.

The judgment of distinguished men in our own country, likewise goes to establish the truth of the passing of the Psalmody of the Old Testament economy into that of the New Testament. The following is the language of impartiality: “From the Jewish synagogue, sacred music very naturally passed into the Christian sanctuary. Our blessed Lord himself, on that memorable night when he instituted the sacramental memorial of his dying love, furnished the transition act by concluding the solemnity with a hymn. † As the first Christians were drawn from the synagogue, they naturally brought

* Ut extra psalmos vel scripturas canonicas nihil poetice compositum in ecclesia psallatur.

† The Hillel, some portion of Psalms 113 to 118. Princeton Bib. Repertory for 1829.

with them those Songs of Zion, which were associated with all their earliest recollections and best feelings, and appropriated them to the services of the new dispensation." And as to changes "in the hands of apostles or of Christian poets in apostolic times, we have no information. At a later period we find them in general use in the churches, and judged by the fathers the most estimable portion of their religious services. The Apostolical Canons contain the injunction; 'Let another sing the *hymns* of David, and let the people repeat the concluding lines.' We can hardly conceive it possible that the Psalms of David could have been so generally adopted in the churches, and so highly esteemed by the best of the fathers, unless they had been introduced or sanctioned by the apostles and inspired teachers."*

Such are the views, upon the subject before us, of the men of character at Princeton, N. J., the oldest seat, in the United States, of Presbyterian literature, science, and theological lore. They amply sustain our statements. The question before us will not be misapprehended. It is not whether, as a fact, hymns of human composure were used, in the church, at an early day; but whether they were introduced, by divine authority, to the exclusion of the inspired psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and whether the inspired songs were introduced by heretics to subserve the cause of heresy. The negative of these positions it was our aim to

* Princeton Biblical Repertory for 1829.

show, and in our views we are fully sustained by the historical statements now given. The question of the divine authority of the modern hymns of human composure, and of the fitness or unfitness of Bible Psalms for the Psalmody of the New Testament economy, will come before us as we advance. What has been stated will aid in leading to a fair conclusion on those points—historical facts—just now at issue.

Before concluding this letter, it may be of use to remark the importance of a distinct perception of the subject of discussion, and of abiding by it while it is before us. It is not, then, a dispute as to any particular version of inspired Psalms or hymns or odes; but for a fair version, whether in prose or verse, of the book of Psalms. Nor is it an opposition to other sacred hymns besides those found in the book of Psalms. This form of the controversy is modern and of limited extent. The great point is the preservation of the book of Psalms in its proper place, in the church's Psalmody. Had it not been excluded from that place, so extensively as it really is, by the churches in our country, and by arguments, we regret to say, utterly unworthy of enlightened and good men, it is not probable that the controversy would ever have disturbed the church's peace. The occasional and passing use of a new hymn is a matter of small import compared with the entire rejection of the inspired book of Psalms from the church's Psalmody,

and for such reasons as have been generally assigned. Whether right or wrong, that the occasional use of such a hymn, though not to the exclusion of the inspired Book, had a place at an early—but not her earliest—day in the church, is acknowledged by all. The suggestion of modifications of the ancient Psalmody, or of the making of new hymns by the apostles, is all unfounded supposition. On this it is confessed, “we have no information. No book of new hymns, either by the Gnostics, Bardesanes, his son Harmonius, or by the demon and relic worshipper, the *orthodox* Ephræm, or any other, ever by authority took the place in the church of Zion’s inspired songs.”

It will be remembered, too, that we at present deal with the facts of history, and treat not of the inquiry of divine appointment; for really the fathers from the second century and onward, are of no authority in the settling of what are divine appointments, whatever weight they may have in the sustaining of papal superstitions. Any who have an adequate acquaintance with the history of those early ages of the church, will not accuse me of speaking in this case with undue severity. Hear a competent witness, while he refers to the “system of spiritual prostitution, superstition and tyranny,” which was the product of a “deeply-working spirit acting from within the church—far more potent than the authority of popes themselves, even about the walls of the Vatican.” And that “in

the second and third centuries." To enable us to judge of things at those periods, the writer recommends "those who may now be carrying the 'Hymni Ecclesiæ' * in their pockets or in their bosoms, to look into the history of monkery." J. Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*, pp. 108, 554.

The object with which we set out is not forgotten; the union of the visible church in this interesting part of her solemnities. In the mean time, many of you are *practically* dividing them. From the psalmody of most of your churches Zion's inspired songs are in a state of exile; and the arguments most popular and frequently used to reconcile the Christian mind to their banishment, if they mean any thing, represent those divine compositions as *Christless*, and of course, "*almost*," if not altogether, "contrary to the spirit of the gospel!" This controversy, in its modern shape, covers principles nearly affecting the character and authority of God's revelation to man, and deeply touches the foundation of morals. We are far from imputing to those who go into the practice upon which we animadvert, the intention of producing or of vindicating such results; and to express our conviction of the evils now stated, we can assure our friends, is to us far from a pleasant task; while to speak plainly, we think, is not at variance either with manly courtesy or Christian kindness. And the case demands that we speak plainly.

* The hymns of the church.

LETTER III.

MODERN HISTORY OF PSALMODY.

SUMMARY REMARKS—WALDENSES—WICKLIFFE—HUSS—LUTHER—
 CALVIN—CHURCH OF ENGLAND—SCOTLAND—WATTS—AMERICAN
 CHURCHES—CONGREGATIONALISTS—PRESBYTERIANS—ASSOCI-
 ATE—ASSOCIATE REFORMED—REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS—SEN-
 TIMENTS AND PRACTICE OF—REFLECTIONS.

DEAR BRETHREN:—It appears from the records of the early periods of the church, that Christians, in their public assemblies, praised God in the language of scripture songs. It also appears, that the term *hymn* was applied to David's Psalms. We have also seen, that though Psalmody was universal in the Eastern churches, from the beginning; yet it was not general in those of the West before the fourth century. In that age, it likewise appears to have been the practice of certain heretics, to reproach the orthodox, for singing with sobriety the divine songs of inspiration, preferring to them the inflammatory compositions of their own invention. We now turn to the history of psalmody in later times.

In the middle ages, the ages too of moral gloom and terrible superstition, the purest section of the church of God was found in the valleys of Pied-

mont. Among the Waldenses were found the simplicity of the apostolic order, and the purity of evangelical worship. They sung, "mid Alpine cliffs," the Psalms of Scripture. And long before the Reformation dawned on Europe, they sung them in metre. "The Albigenses, in 1210, were metre psalm-singers." The morning-star of the Reformation used them. *Wickliffe* is blamed by some for singing metre psalms. *John Huss*, in the fifteenth, as *Wickliffe* had done in the fourteenth century,* sung the psalms in verse. These were not friends, either to Papal domination, or to Arian heresy.†

* Smith's Prim. Psal. p. 270.

† When the dark and cruel reign of Antichrist commenced, those who held the faith, worship, and order of the gospel, were found in the valleys of Piedmont. In the middle ages, as at this day, they suffered indescribable persecutions from the hands of "the son of perdition." No history is more interesting than theirs. In those ages when darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness all other people, the *Vaudois*, as *Thuanus*, who was their enemy, relates, "could all read and write. They were acquainted with French so far as was needful for understanding the Bible, and the *singing of Psalms*."* It was required of those who were to be ordained to the ministry, along with other scriptures, to commit to memory "the writings of David."* Numbers of those, who, under the persecution of the Duke of Savoy, A. D. 1686, sought a refuge in the Swiss cantons, three years after, returned under their pastor, *Arnaud*, who was also their martial chief. Having overcome their enemies, and regained their native valleys, "at the church of Guigon they engaged in worship, sang the 74th Psalm, and their colonel and pastor, *Arnaud*, preached on the 129th Psalm."† Thus we see the Psalms of David were sung, by the best of men, in every age.

* *Milner*. † Mem. of Waldenses, by a Clergyman of the Church of England

But what was the course pursued at the Reformation; that period when God, in remarkable providences, descended to free the human mind from chains, and his church from bondage? The reformers celebrated the praise of their Redeemer; and they did so in the use of scripture songs. *Luther*, as early as the year 1525, published a metre version of the Psalms. In the same year, at Augsburg, was published a poetic translation, of the whole book, by another hand.

In the year 1543, under the auspices of *Calvin*, fifty of the Psalms, translated into verse by *Marmot*, a refugee from papal persecution, were printed at Geneva. *Marmot* died shortly after this, and *Beza*, the devout, learned and polished companion of *Calvin*, versified the remainder. The whole book, thus versified, was in a few years published. Such was the demand then for the book of Psalms, that the press was unable to meet it. In A. D. 1553, the use of it was interdicted by a bull from Rome. The Protestants of that day did not perceive that it *dulled their worship*; nor did the perverters of the church's faith hope to derive any benefit to their cause from its use. It was devoutly sung by the reformers, and *burlesqued by the papists*.

In England the friends of reform were also the friends of the Bible Psalms. For their use, several of them were turned into metre by *Wyatt* and others; but a full version was not obtained till after the accession of Elizabeth. The year 1562 pre-

sented that by *Sternhold, Hopkins, Cox, Norton, &c.* This was used in the Church of England till superseded by the more imperfect version of *Tate and Brady*,* in A. D. 1696. The Puritans of England, in A. D. 1562, contended, among other things, for reform in the Psalmody of the church. They proposed "That *the Psalms* should be sung distinctly by the whole congregation." Some of the reformers in that kingdom, amidst the commotions of the times, it seems, for a little, hesitated, as to the propriety of Psalmody in the church: this appears from one of *Latimer's* orders, in A. D. 1537, when bishop of Worcester. The same thing is intimated in a protestation of some of the clergy, in the previous year, within the province of Canterbury.† But none who admitted the propriety

* This innovation was not effected without a struggle. Hear on this the testimony of a man, who, in taste and criticism, had no superior—"It was a change much for the worse, when the *pedantry of pretenders* to taste in literary composition, thrust out this excellent translation (*Sternhold and Hopkins's*) from many of our churches, to make room for what still goes by the name of the new version, that of *Tate and Brady*. The innovation, when it was first attempted, was opposed, though in the end unsuccessfully, by the *soundest divines, the most accomplished scholars, and the men of the truest taste*, at that time in the seat of authority in the Church of England. It will be an alteration still more for the worse, if both these versions should be made to give place to another of later date, departing still farther from the *strict letter of the text*, and compensating its *want of accuracy* by nothing more than the *meretricious ornaments of modern poetry*."—*Bp. Horsley's Pref. to his version.*

† Prim. Psal.

of singing, ever doubted the evangelical character of inspired songs, or refused to employ them in sacred praise. This is a refinement of modern evangelizers.

In the Scottish Church the reformers, from the first, practised Psalmody. It is said they sung the book of Psalms in prose; the form, perhaps, in which it should still be used. Before A. D. 1546, there is no authentic account of any use of metred Psalms in that church; but both before and after that period, in one form or another, the book of Psalms was uniformly employed in their congregations.*

In 1649, the General Assembly at Edinburgh, adopted the version which she still uses. The ground-work of this was laid by Mr. *Francis Rouse*, who is represented as a man of piety and learning. It was recommended to the attention of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. Under their correcting hand, in the course of several years, it was improved. It was then forwarded to the North, and was, by the supreme judicatory of the Scottish Church, committed to committees for revision. Years were by them employed in comparing it with the original Hebrew, and in attempting to carry as

* In A. D. 1556, versified psalms were commonly sung in their assemblies. The whole book of Psalms, however, was not put into measure before 1559; * from which period, a version, first published at Geneva, was authorized, till superseded by that still used in the Church of Scotland.

* M'Crie's *Life of Knox*, p. 415.

much as possible of the spirit of the primitive composition into the translation.* And the man of literature and taste, who shall carefully examine the subject, it is believed, will admit, that they admirably succeeded. Like the version of the Bible, this of the Psalms, is not remarkable for modern elegance of diction; but it is remarkably literal. To present the book of Psalms in its native simplicity, beauties, and force, was the aim of the Westminster divines, as well as of the Assembly at Edinburgh. To the man of God, to the child of grace, and the man of legitimate taste, these characteristics must be a recommendation.†

* Acts of Assembly, pp. 353, 428, 479.

† The testimony of Dr. *Ridgely*, in his system of divinity, is not only decidedly in favour of the Book of Psalms being suitable for the praises of the New Testament church, but also for the use of the Scottish version. He gives it the preference above every other.

The justly celebrated Rev. William Romaine, likewise, gives his testimony to the excellence of this version. I shall gratify my reader with a few extracts from his Essay on Psalmody, a work which very lately came to my hand. “Sternhold and Hopkins,” he observes, “had a scrupulous regard for the very words of Scripture—the versification is not always smooth—but what is a thousand times more valuable, it is generally the sentiment of the Holy Spirit. This should silence every objection—it is the word of God. This version comes nearer the original than any I have seen, except the *Scotch*, which I have made use of when it appeared to me better expressed than the English. Here is every thing great, and noble, and divine, although not in Dr. Watts’ way or style. It is not—as good old Mr. Hall used to call it, *Watts’ jingle*.” *Romaine’s Works*, vol. 8, p. 339. Or, as Mr. Bradbury,—a high name—contemporaneously designated his hymns—Watts’ *Whymes*.

In the American churches, this version was extensively used; and in all the Presbyterian churches of the southern and middle states, till a recent period, none other was admitted.

Early in the last century Dr. Watts, in England, published his Imitation of some of David's Psalms, accompanied with other hymns. These he introduced to public notice by prefaces, containing bitter libels against the original songs of Zion. The days of Puritanic zeal had then passed away. The licentious and unprincipled reigns of the second Charles and James, had given a shock to the morals and to the piety of the nation, under the influence of which they languished, and were ready to expire. The principles of infidelity had extended to every department of the social body, and were, in both church and state, more extensively embraced than is generally admitted. Comparatively few of Zion's most conspicuous sons escaped the contagion of a maddening philosophy, which, in its phrensy, more openly, at a succeeding period, expressed the idle hope of universally desolating the heritage of God. At such a time it is not strange that an indulgent ear should be given to unhallowed suggestions against any portion of the word of God; and especially when recommended by the imposing pretensions to superior liberality and light. In the days of martyrdom for reading the word of God, it was not deemed unsuitable in songs of praise to employ the language of the Holy

Ghost. But other times succeeded, when religious sentiments of another cast, and piety of another tone, were countenanced.* It was found that the use of scripture songs “flattened devotion, awakened regret, and touched all the springs of uneasiness in the worshipper’s breast.”† Such were the sentiments, and such was the language of Dr. Watts.

The Imitation of the Psalms of Dr. Watts, and his hymns, recommended by the sentiments of his prefaces, found their way across the Atlantic, and gradually obtained footing in the Congregational churches of New England. As these advanced, the scripture songs retired, and, with them, no small share of the orthodox principles, the theological intelligence and the holy practice, that had previously distinguished the Puritans of our country, the descendants of the Pilgrims.

The Synod of New York and Philadelphia, now the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, had continued to employ the scripture psalms, and in that version used in the Church of Scotland.

* “Human compositions are preferred to divine. Man’s poetry is exalted above the poetry of the Holy Ghost.—The word of man has got a preference in the church above the word of God. It is not difficult to account for this strange practice. Our people had lost sight of the meaning of the Psalms. *They did not see their relation to Jesus Christ.* This happened when vital religion began to decay among us, more than a century ago.”—*Romaine’s Works*, vol. 8. p. 321.

† Dr. Watts.

But the *Imitation* of Watts began to agitate their congregations. "Questions connected with the subject of Psalmody were repeatedly presented to Synod."* Sundry members and congregations within their bounds expressed a preference for Watts' to the Bible Psalms, as "most for edification," and in 1763 made inquiry whether the use of the *Imitation* would be *allowed*. An answer to the inquiry was declined. Want of acquaintance with the production of Watts prevented, for the time, either a permission or prohibition, farther than the making of no objection to its use by those who preferred it, till the farther consideration of the subject.

In 1764 the subject was again before them, and was postponed. Next year, 1765, it was again discussed. A committee, composed of Dr. Finley, and Mr. M'Dowell, to whom the subject had been committed, made their report, which was adopted, and which indicates the leaning of their supreme judicatory at that time. The report is in these words: "The Synod judge it best, in present circumstances, only to declare that they look on the inspired Psalms in scripture to be proper matter to be sung in divine worship, according to their original design, and the practice of the Christian churches; yet will not forbid those to use the imitation of them, whose judgment and inclination lead them to do so." This action was sufficiently cautious: yet it very dis-

* History of the Presbyterian Church, vol. ii. p. 407—409.

tinctly asserts the *fitness* of the matter of the Psalms for divine worship, their *original design* to be sung in the Christian church, and that they are *inspired*. It will be recollected that the version of which they thus speak, was the Scottish or Westminster, incorrectly, by many, called Rouse's.

The Imitation continued to agitate the church. By appeal the subject was, in 1773, again brought up. The report of a committee on it was adopted. This report advised to abstain from judging "the merits of the appeal, and there not being time to consider the several versions of the Psalms in question, as congregations had been allowed to settle this matter according to *their own choice*, with this allowance there should be no interference." The parties are advised to *moderation and peace*. The matter was still agitated. In 1785 an overture was presented, complaining that "the using different books of Psalmody is matter of offence not only to presbyterians of different denominations, but also to many congregations under our own care"—the care of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. The proposal was made of composing a version with the assistance "of all the versions" to which they had access, more suitable to their "circumstances and taste" than any which they yet had. The committee appointed to this laudable work, next year, 1786, reported progress; but the whole affair was superseded by the action of next year, 1787,

in the adoption of the following resolution: "The synod did allow, and do hereby allow that Dr. Watts' imitation of David's Psalms, as revised by Mr. Barlow, be used in the churches and families under their care."* Thus the affair was left, and so it remains.

It is curious, if not instructive, to see the progressive steps in this movement. The influence of a limited popular *inclination* upon judicative proceedings; the *prudence* of the first steps; the fact, that till very lately, if at all, the imitation of Dr. Watts has a place in the Psalmody of the church by a mere allowance—an act of toleration, at most, a timid semi-official permission—and not an authoritative decision, upon a thorough examination; and it is not unworthy of notice that thus Isaac Watts, D. D., and Joel Barlow, Esq., became the sweet Psalmists of the church? Watts and Barlow! Probably Mr. Barlow, whose religious creed is not our subject of inquiry, was appropriately the reviser of Dr. Watts. This semi-official decision, by many of the church, was not cordially received. Violent animosities, bitterness of spirit, schisms and divisions, were, for a time, the most prominent consequences of the measure. The result, however, has been practically an extensive banishment from the church's Psalmody of a version of inspired songs, and the substitution of

* History of the Presbyterian Church, vol. ii. p. 409.

a very lame imitation of a part of them, accompanied with successions of hymns of more than doubtful character.

The above statement is amply sustained by the sober judgment of very distinguished presbyterians of the present day. We give the following as examples: President Junkin remarks, "Dr. Watts has attempted, professedly, to *improve* upon the sentiment, the very matter, and the order, and by various omissions and additions, to fit the Psalms for Christian worship. This is unfair. If Pope had taken the same license with the poems of Homer, all the amateurs of Greek poetry in the world would have cried—Shame on the presumptuous intruder! But it is a pious and zealous Christian divine [?] who has taken this liberty with the songs of Zion, and almost the whole church acquiesces in it. What would we think of the French poet who, proposing to enrich French literature with a versification of the masterpiece of the English muse, should mangle and transpose the torn limbs of the *Paradise Lost*, until Milton himself might meet his first-born on the highway and not recognise it? And must this literary butchery be tolerated, because forsooth the victim is the inspired Psalmist? Why should the Heaven-taught bard be misrepresented thus? Let us rather have the songs of inspiration as God inspired them, and as nearly as is possible, and consistent with the laws of English versification. God's order of thought is doubtless the best for his

church. If any one think he can write better spiritual songs than the sweet singer of Israel, let him do it; but let him not dress the savoury meat which God hath prepared, until all the substance and savour are gone, and then present it to us as an imitation of David's psalms."*

This insipid thing, the result of the mangling butchery and unskilful cookery of what is thus torn, is the proposed improvement of the *sentiment*, *matter* and *order* of what God, by the Spirit of inspiration, provided for the refreshing and nourishing the immortal souls of his people!

The judgment of another† whose competence, from his known talents, learning, and enlightened intrepidity in favour of sound doctrine, and moral order; few will venture to dispute, has a claim upon the public regard. Of the *Imitation* he says, "We freely confess that, for ourselves, we consider the Paraphrase of the Psalms, by Dr. Watts, the most defective part of our Psalmody; and only more and more marvel that such a miserable attempt should have acquired so much reputation."‡ Such, it is believed, is the persuasion upon the subject of every one qualified to judge in the case.

But what of the successive streams of hymns with which the church is deluged? It will be re-

* Lectures on the Prophecies, by George Junkin, D. D., pp. 231, 233.

† Rev. R. J. Breckinridge, D. D.

‡ Spirit of the Nineteenth Century, vol. ii. 586.

membered that the abstract question of the use of a modern hymn is not now before us. That will be noticed in its own place. And allowing for the moment its admissibility, the great difficulty and labour of furnishing a safe and approvable selection is readily granted. The dissatisfaction repeatedly expressed by the Presbyterian church, in the course of the past fifty years, in respect of their matter of Psalmody, and the repeated attempts to correct it; speak an instructive lesson to all concerned. Some thirty years ago a very respectable committee was raised to take it in hand. One great object of that appointment was, like that of 1785, to have a *version* of the Book of Psalms. Years passed by, and the best and most competent members of the committee were called from their earthly labours. The work fell into unfit hands, and the result was a multiplication of hymns, and a new book. This book contained the hymns *devoutly* sung by the church for many years. What was the character of that book? The action of the able committee of 1838—1843 answers this question. Twenty-five per cent.—one fourth part, if not more—that committee expunged as unfit for Christian worship! And why expunge so many, or any of them? They had reason for the expurgation or excision. This is the reply—“On a critical examination they found many hymns deficient in literary merit, some incorrect in doctrine, and many altogether unsuitable for the sanctuary as

songs of praise, for want of suitable sentiments, although not incorrect in doctrine or deficient in literary merit.”* The reflection is one of sadness, that a Christian people, during fifteen or sixteen years, should have, as the matter of their divine praise, a book, the one-fourth of its hundreds of hymns being of such a character—not only defective in literary merit, but marked by *unsuitable sentiments* and *erroneous doctrine!* For this what can be a compensation? Certainly not the liquid softness of the verse’s flow.

And does the result of the years of labour of the able men of the committee of 1838—1843, give satisfaction? Hear the decision of the Princeton Review, the ablest journal of the Presbyterian church, and one of the first in our country. “We are free to confess that there are many things in the book laid before the Assembly which we think ought not to be there; hymns which we consider unsuitable for the worship of God. Some of them are mere sentimental effusions; some objectionable from the lightness of their measure, and others for their want of all poetic excellence.”†

We enter not into the inquiry as to the merits of these compositions, as hymns of human structure. The succession of hymn book to hymn book, their doubtful character, and the great evils of a fluctuating state of the religious mind, by an un-

* Spirit of the Nineteenth Century, vol. ii. 582.

† Princeton Review, vol. xv. 522.

settled Psalmody, in this part of sacred worship, are the subjects before us. The evils are felt by every serious and reflecting person. Adherence to a confessedly *faithful version of inspired Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, saves from those misgivings and agitations.

Other denominations of Christians, when they saw the most numerous, and most influential body of professors in the United States, abandon the songs of inspiration, practically declaring them unfit for Christian lips, took the alarm. They considered the language of Dr. Watts, on this subject, to be impious. His arguments in favour of his own compositions were viewed as invectives against an important portion of the word of God. Hence, in their public ministrations, they testified against the ground he had taken, and the very unhappy language he had used, as well as against those who had entered into his views, by the adoption of his productions, in place of the Book of Psalms; while they vindicated the integrity of the oracles of truth, holding them all to be profitable for "instruction in righteousness."—The press, too, was enlisted in the contest, and judicial deeds, warning against, and forbidding the use of those innovations, were passed. The Associate, the Associate Reformed, and Reformed Presbyterian churches, were all conspicuous in defence of inspired psalms and hymns, as suitable to the worship of the church of God.

It is profitable, though not always pleasant, to mark the origin, progress, and change of opinions, and their correspondent practices. How often, alas! is the declaration of principles and order the offspring, not of deep-laid conviction, but of transient circumstances. The professions of public bodies afford but little security for the course the individuals composing them will pursue. We well remember the time when one of these churches, the Associate Reformed, zealously declared, and repeatedly sanctioned deeds in opposition to the introduction of human compositures in the worship of God. Watts' Imitation and hymns were in view, when, in a judicial act, this church, after a panegyric on the Book of Psalms, declared—"Nor shall any compositures, *merely human*, be sung in any of the Associate Reformed churches." It was, indeed, by some of the members of that church, as well as by others, suspected that the words, *merely human*, were calculated, if not intended, to cover a retreat from this ground at some convenient time. But the suspicion was deemed ungenerous, and the expression of it was branded with the charge of slander. The dubious terms were explained, so as to mitigate the fears of the scrupulous. The amiable Mr. *Hemphill*, in his explanation of what is a *merely human* compositure, fully takes in all such as the poetic works of Dr. Watts. He concludes his remarks in these words: "We prefer a translation of these divine songs. (the scripture psalms) to hu-

man composes, however excellent." In this, there is no doubt Mr. Hemphill was sincere. Suspicions existed, however, that all of his brethren were not equally so. Whether these suspicions were well or ill founded, is not for us to say. Subsequent events will not, perhaps, justify them. Human conduct is much influenced by circumstances! and purity of intention may be consistent with contradictory acts.

In the neighbourhood of those churches where the compositions of Dr. Watts were adopted, and produced dissatisfaction, the Associate Reformed ministers were not scrupulous in keeping alive the discontents that existed. It is no impeachment of their motives, when it is stated as a fact that they profited by these discontents. Separation from former connexions on the ground of Psalmody, was encouraged; and, by such as separated, their churches, in various parts of the continent, were enlarged, and some almost wholly formed. The accession of the Rev. Mr. Rankin, and multitudes of private members from the Presbyterian church, is still fresh in our recollection. But in the mean time, some of the brethren, when occasionally called to direct the public worship in the congregations of another connexion, used, without hesitation, the *Imitation* of the Psalms.

This was thought, by many, not to comport with that candour, and regard to consistency, which should characterize the movements of that ministry which

had, by so many pledges, invited public confidence to repose in its stability. To denounce, in public deeds, as will-worship, the use of all such compositions as the hymns of Dr. Watts; to employ this as an instrument of rending churches, and of breaking up former connexions; while, in other places they practised what had been publicly denounced as a corruption of religious worship, and acted upon as a sufficient ground of separation in ecclesiastical communion, was deemed by not a few, who probably did not sufficiently qualify the severity of their conclusions by the mitigations of charity, not easily reconcilable with candour.

In their session of May, 1816, their General Synod passed an act, admitting into their churches the psalm book of the Reformed Dutch Church, according to its last revision. This measure set aside their former act on this subject. Their resolution runs in the following terms: "*Resolved*, That the version of the Book of Psalms, in the Old Testament, recently prepared for the use of the Reformed Dutch Church in America, be permitted to be used," &c. Now to a person unacquainted with the real matter of fact, it would appear from this, that the Reformed Dutch Church had recently prepared a version of the Book of Psalms. Nothing, however, can be farther from the truth. All that the committee of that church was authorized to do in the matter, was, to make an "improved and enlarged" selection of psalms and hymns. The committee

fulfilled their appointment, by giving their psalm book a character more *remote* from the "Book of Psalms, in the Old Testament," than was the one which they formerly used. The truth is it is a selection chiefly from Watts, and embraces a practical recognition of the very unwarrantable sentiments of the Doctor, respecting the Book of Psalms. For instance, to his *twenty-four lines*, in place of the whole 109th Psalm, as well as to other changes and omissions, a sanction is thus given. To go thus far, these sons of the venerable Church of Holland, had to violate the principles of her constitution.* The Associate Reformed brethren have adopted this selection, and shall we say unwittingly presented it to their people as *a recent version of the Book of Psalms, in the Old Testament?* Since these brethren are now persuaded that they were, on this subject, formerly in the wrong; and being now satisfied that their congregations would be more edified by using a *mutilated imitation* of the Psalms, than by the Psalms themselves; and seeing they act upon this, would it not have been more manly, at once, to have declared in favour of the compositions of Dr. Watts? If the rejection of *inspired songs* was the price of extended union, and the adoption of their *rivals* its destined bond, we would suppose this course of openness more eligible than that which is pursued. That they, in this business, a business which will long be deplored, aimed at

* See Constit. of the Reformed Dutch Church, Art. 69.

the extension of fraternal communion, and the edification of Zion, charity induces us to suppose; for the hypothesis of playing a double game with the scrupulosity of their own people, and the immobility of the Holland Church, is refuted, we would hope, not only by a liberal construction of conduct, but also by the character of those whose agency carried the measure.

It is nevertheless painful to have confidence met by disappointment. The course pursued by the Associate Reformed Church has not been marked by any great degree of consistency. Her decisions and her counter decisions, her constitution and discordant administration, do not authorize that confidence, which the personal respectability of her ministry would seem to invite. I would not impeach her motives of action; because, in a future expose, she may vindicate them as correct. I will not therefore assert, that she, as a distinct Christian society, was formed on the principle of expediency; nor will I say, that in her various changes she has acted merely on this principle, for by itself, it is a paltry one. Charity forbids severity of animadversion, and whatever may be the result, candour and liberality instruct us to hope, that it will not only be overruled for general good, but will also develop the purest motives to have actuated those gentlemen who have appeared conspicuous in the origin and progress of these measures. But, however *well meant*, the measure respecting Psalmody

is a *bad one*. It is at once an abandonment of a divine institution, a desertion of those who plead for it, and the violation of a solemn pledge to the contrary. For this we should weep in secret.*

From an impartial review of the church's history, ancient and modern, we are authorized to infer, that in every age her Psalmody embraced the book of Psalms. Without any prejudice to their cause, who are the advocates of Zion's songs, it may be, and is admitted, that human composures existed, and in some sections of the Christian commonwealth had a place beside inspired composures. But their existence and use neither prove, nor disprove, a divine appointment. That fact must be settled by other evidence than the practice of either ancient or modern days.

That the book of Psalms, in whole or in part, was unfit for Christian praise, was a discovery left to be made, in the light of contending systems, political, moral, and religious, in the eighteenth century. Ancient piety, I think, would not have listened with patience to be told, that the words of inspiration "darkened our views of God the Saviour, tended to make heresy triumphant," and that David

* The Associate Reformed Church subsequently divided on the subjects of Psalmody, Occasional Communion, and Slavery. The brethren under that name are now found in three distinct bodies, no longer under one organization. It is believed that, in *their own* churches, the Bible Psalms are used; and for their continued use, it is understood, that the Synods of the West and the South are decidedly zealous.

was unfit to appear in the sanctuary, till converted into a Christian by such a man as Dr. Watts. Had we no information on the subject but what the Doctor's prefaces supply, we should be tempted to inquire whether he was indeed friendly to our religion, or whether he was an enemy in disguise. We have read "Christianity as old as the Creation;" an imposing title, covering a bold attack upon divine revelation. An *Imitation* of a portion of David's Psalms, accompanied by a libel against the rest, by Dr. Watts, promises little more than the insidious publication of Mr. Tindal. And certainly if there be, as is more than intimated by the Doctor and his friends, a contradiction between the word of God in the Old Testament, and the word of God in the New Testament, both must fall. The force on the one side would then be equal to that on the other. Forces equal and contrary, effect their mutual destruction. At this rate, we have no divine revelation. So the deist has said; and, as often as he has said it, his assertion has been refuted. And though the *imitator* of the Psalms has furnished premises for a similar conclusion, we will not believe him; for we know his premises are untrue, and the conclusions, we trust, he did not himself believe. Nay, though he asserted the existence of a contradiction,* it was not, we wish to believe, a settled article of his creed.

* "Psal. lxi. 26—28 is *so* CONTRARY to the new commandment of *loving our enemies,*" &c.—*Watts' Pref.* p. 5.

The *imitator* proposed to convert David, the sweet singer of Israel, into a Christian.* That is, the Psalms, such of them at least as he thought worthy of imitation, must be made to speak a language, which, according to the *reformer* of David, the Holy Ghost did not intend they should speak. Still, however, *reformed* as David was, he was unfit for the sanctuaries of America. The *Imitation* and hymns of Dr. Watts were adapted to the British monarchy; America had happily become both independent and republican. The reformer must be reformed. Those compositions which superseded the hymns of inspiration, must, after our revolution, be "adapted to the Christian worship in the United States," and *Joel Barlow*, Esq. performs the important work!

In these days of tumult and commotion, there is nothing wonderful. Astonishing events pass in succession so close, that time is not given them to impress the mind. The commotion will, however, subside, and the tumult will be stilled. What is now permitted to pass by, without remark, will fill the men of a future age with surprise. When they shall have admitted, in its full bearing, the truth, that God is not affected by political changes, and that the revolutions of empires do not authorize a change in the appointments of Christ; it may perhaps seem strange to them, that many pious men deemed that the Christian worship, on the other

* Watts' Pref. p. 10.

side of the Atlantic, might be something different from what it was in the United States; or that our worship, when independent States, ought to be changed from what it was when we were dependent colonies, or that the bitterness of party political feeling must mingle itself with our stated Psalmody. They will readily perceive, that, on the principle which would justify the hypothesis, no two individuals could ever unite in the use of the same psalm; because it is not likely that their circumstances would ever be precisely the same. But in human life there are moments of inexplicable infatuation. How else account for the strange course pursued, in reference to Psalmody, by men of such elevated standing as the American churches can claim as their own? Such events, with a distinct and solemn voice, urge upon our attention the divine injunctions—"Be not high-minded, but fear"—and "lean not unto thine own understanding."

LETTER IV.

REASONS FOR RETAINING THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

SUBJECT STATED—VERSIONS—ARGUMENTS—DIVINE INSTITUTION—
SUITABLENESS OF MATTER—EXCELLENCE—HUMAN COMPOSITIONS
NOT APPOINTED—BAD ARGUMENTS—EVIL TENDENCY OF PREFER-
RING HUMAN TO INSPIRED SONGS—SUMMARY.

DEAR BRETHREN:—In this letter I propose a brief discussion of the following question: *Ought the Book of Psalms to be used still in the public Psalmody of the church?* On the determination of this question, as far as we are concerned, the issue of the controversy depends. The matter in debate should not be confounded with others that may be but very remotely or incidentally connected with it.

The inquiry, then, is not, whether it be lawful to use in the praise of God any other inspired songs besides what are found in the Book of Psalms? This, so far as I know, has never been a matter of contention.* Nor is it any matter of dispute, in

* The General Assembly of the Reformed Church of Scotland, in 1647 and 1648, approved of the use of other inspired songs, beside those found in the Book of Psalms, in the church's Psalmody. This appears, by the appointment of a committee to select and prepare such for use, by a translation into measured verse. See Acts of Assembly for those years. Their caution

the present instance, what *version* of the inspired songs shall be used. The question at issue is— Shall we have *any fair and full version* of this divine Book, as the matter of our praise? Those on the one side expressly take the affirmative and say, Let us have the best version; and, if practicable, let us have a better than any now extant. On the other side, this has been as explicitly refused. *The book of Psalms is actually excluded from the Psalmody of their churches.* That against which we remonstrate is *the expulsion of the book of* on the subject, and long exclusive use of the Book of Psalms, indicate their persuasion that these additions were not necessary, though allowable. More than one hundred and thirty years after that period, the established church of Scotland, after a struggle, succeeded in the introduction of some loose paraphrases of scripture into her Psalmody. Her more faithful ministers opposed them as unfit for the sanctuary; and of them, not long since, some hard things have been said by the ablest ministers of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Dr. Cook, on the floor of the Assembly, is reported to have pronounced them heathenish in style, and corrupt in doctrine.

Into the discussion of this matter we do not now fully enter. The Christian who *studies, understands, digests the principles of,* and *uses well* the book of Psalms, it is more than probable, will be satisfied with it. But, on the subject of the use of other *inspired* songs, we see no reason to differ with our reforming ancestors; while, with those who plead for the use of the book of Psalms alone, we will have no controversy, as practically, that is our own position. The use of a faithful version of such songs as Isa. xxvi. 1—9, and Rev. v. 9—13, would not, we think, corrupt the worship of the house of God. It is hoped, however, that a new subject of dispute upon this subject will not be raised. It would be ill advised. See our remark before made.*

* See page 77.

Psalms by an IMITATION; the exclusion of the spiritual songs of inspiration, by adopting the collected volumes of hymns which are not inspired.

I offer only a word more respecting versions. I have said the dispute is not about *versions*; this should be kept in recollection. Let us have that which *justly* merits the name of a *version*, and the contest shall end. We ought, indeed, to select the best. We believe that used in the Church of Scotland, in the Associate and Reformed Presbyterian Churches, is the best. We do not say it is perfect; it is susceptible of improvement, as the version of our Bible is; but we have none better; we have no other one so good. If the genius of the original, the language of the Spirit of God, simplicity of diction, energy of thought, striking imagery and transforming sentiment, be recommendations,—it is believed this translation has them, in a degree to which no other one, in verse, in our language can lay claim.

We know, indeed, other compositions, the verbiage of which glides more smoothly along. And, to those who pay a greater deference to sound than to sentiment, it is not doubted such will afford more pleasure. But the man of mind, the scholar of cultivated taste, the Christian of exalted piety, will, when left to the decision of their own judgment, unite in preference of sense to sound, of body to shadow, and of the word of God to that of man. In more cases than that of Psalmody, the corrup-

tion of religious taste, from a rage of innovation, a spirit of easy accommodation, neutrality of mind, or causes of equally unworthy character, is lamented by not a few. But of this enough. I proceed to state and vindicate the following position:—

A CORRECT AND FAITHFUL VERSION OF THE WHOLE BOOK OF PSALMS SHOULD BE EMPLOYED IN THE PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

I vindicate this assertion on the ground of divine appointment—on the ground of the suitability of this book—of its superior excellence above all human composure—of the uncertainty of the divine permission of such human composes—of the unsatisfactory nature of the arguments used to recommend them—and the dangerous consequences of their introduction into the public worship of the church.

DIVINE APPOINTMENT is my first reason for the continued use of the Book of Psalms in the praises offered to God in Zion. The compositions of this book were given for this purpose. They were inscribed to the master of song in the sanctuary; and even the most personal meditations of the inspired Psalmist were so addressed. They were actually employed in the church of God, with his approbation; and were suitable for the service of praise. Their form, their nature and their designation, unite in pointing out their use. I do not rest the proof of the divine institution of these sacred odes, as the matter of the church's Psalmody,

on the simple fact of a reforming king of Judah commanding that they should be employed.* I add to that evidence the facts that in the days of inspiration and prophecy, these divine compositions were so used; that their name and composition intimate that to have been their *appropriate* use; and that their matter and their structure render them fit for this service of the tabernacle of God, under every dispensation of his grace. That the hymn sung by our Lord and his disciples, after the institution of the eucharistic supper, was a portion of that part of the Book of Psalms, called the *Hillel* by the Jews, and which they usually sung at the paschal solemnity, is admitted as more than probable by all, except those individuals who may have some private purpose to uphold by its denial.†

That in the book of Psalms there are typical allusions to the usages of the Old Testament, no

* 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

† “As to the *hymn* itself, we know from the universal consent of Jewish antiquity, that it was composed of Psalms 113, 114, 115, 116, 117 and 118, termed by the Jews *HALEL*, from *HALELU-JAH*, the first word in Psalm 113th. These six psalms were always sung at every paschal solemnity. They sung this great *hillel* on account of the five great benefits referred to in it; viz. 1. The exodus from Egypt. 2. The miraculous division of the Red Sea. 3. The promulgation of the law. 4. The resurrection of the dead. 5. The passion of Messiah.”—*Clarke's Note on Mat.* xxvi. 30.

See also Ravanelli Biblioth. under the word *hymnus*. Lightfoot says on this subject, “He who could have inspired every disciple to have been a David—sings the Psalms of David.”—*Works*, vol. 2, p. 1160.

more unfits it for Christian worship than did the New Testament language of many of the Psalms render them unfit for the devotions of the Israelites; or than New Testament allusions to ancient rites, prove it unsuitable for a Christian directory. Objections against the continued use of inspired songs on this ground, indicate such a defective degree of information as should not be hastily imputed, even to those who possess but very common facilities for Christian instruction.

For the use of these songs we have New Testament authority. Its inspired writers recognise this sacred collection of inspired hymns, under the name of the *Book of Psalms*.* Under this name we do not know that they acknowledged any other. If they did, *where is it now?* Listen to an apostolic command: *Is any merry? let him sing Psalms.*† Had the saints of those days, as doubtless they did, expressed the sacred gladness of their hearts, in singing one of David's Psalms, would that have been an act of obedience or of disobedience? At this day, none will, I presume, have the hardihood to say, by doing so they would have sinned against the glory of the New Testament. The act would have been one of obedience. Then it is confessed that the singing of the Book of Psalms is an institution, even under the present dispensation, of divine authority.

To one consideration more, under this head, we

* Luke xx. 42, and xxiv. 44; Acts i. 20. † James v. 13.

should carefully attend. It is this: the whole word of God is adapted to general edification; but to profit by it *its several parts must be specially applied to the particular ends for which they are given.* The commands, the promises, the examples of scripture, for instance, are all instructive, generally; but in addition to this, each of these has its specific use. Now, the well-instructed saint will apply these several portions according to their intention. Not to employ them particularly, in addition to a general utility, for the special purposes for which they are given, would be to misuse them; it would be, to say the least, criminally to neglect them.

The application of the remark just made is plain. The book of Psalms was given as a part of that revelation which is profitable for instruction; but it was especially given to the church as the matter of her psalmody; not as *a model*, which she might imitate at pleasure, and substitute the imitation in place of the original, but as songs to be used in the exercise of praise: and they were accordingly so employed. Whatever use, then, we may make of them otherwise, if we set them aside, and do not apply them to this specific purpose, we must be chargeable with neglecting them, in that for which God has more particularly given them. To this point I request the attention of such as may honour this letter with a reading. To take away from its appointed use, any portion of sacred scripture, is tantamount to taking it from the Bible of God.

The singing of praise, publicly, is a duty. It is not an extemporary exercise; it requires a form of Psalmody. God has provided for this. His Spirit has dictated a great variety of songs—and collected into *one Book*, for the use of the church, those he judged proper. The question then is, Shall we reject *that* which God has provided, and prefer *our own* effusions; or receive *his*? Turn it as you will, this is really the inquiry. In this collection are to be found *psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs*.* We are expressly commanded to sing these, Col. iii. 16. I request the objector, for *once*, not to quibble; and, again, *I demand evidence of the existence, in the Apostolic age, of any other PSALMS AND HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, than those contained in scripture*. The proof of negatives devolves not on me. To demand it, is unfair.

That these inspired compositions once occupied a place in the church of God, by divine appointment, as suitable matter of her Psalmody, will not now be seriously denied.† The church, in all ages,

* A reference to Trommius' Concordance of the Septuagint, under the word *ῥυμνεω*, *Hymneo*, will amply prove that compositions corresponding to the *hymn* and *song* of the Greek Testament, are abundant in the Book of Psalms. Indeed the Greek version of the Psalms has only to be opened, and their titles prove this; and the Greek version of the Old Testament was generally used in the Apostolic age.

† “*Divine institution* cannot be pleaded with any plausibility, either from Scripture or reason,” says Dr. L. (Disc. p. 77.)—“I have proved,” says Mr. Freeman, “that we have no authority, *divine nor human*, for singing David's Psalms—they should

is one. Whatever institutions she has once received from the hand of her Lord, she is bound to observe until he shall free her from the obligation, or, by an act of his authority, deprive her of the privilege. But, in what page of the New Testament has the church's Head abrogated the use of her inspired hymns? or forbidden her children the consolations they so often found, in chanting them to his praise? The point is too obvious for further pursuit. I cannot bring my mind to reason it lower. The consistent Christian will at once admit—The book of Psalms, in the church's psalmody, had the sanction of divine authority; that sanction has never been *disannulled*; therefore, its use, as such, is yet of God's appointment.

The sum of the argument is this: the book of Psalms was given under the sanction of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; the composition is poetic; the matter of the book is remarkably adapted for the public Psalmody of the church, and for private use; its several parts were under divine su-

not be used as a system of Psalmody."—P. 20. Pray, what evidence is requisite to establish an appointment as divine? How prove the divine right of church government? How prove the divine appointment of infant baptism? Ah! how thoughtlessly men will talk and write. And yet Mr. F. admits that some of David's Psalms may be used. Yes, even without appointment, *divine or human*; and that, notwithstanding his assertion, that no one of these Psalms leads to God through Christ! (P. 6, *et alibi*.) This shows a *gospel* spirit with a witness. Worship without divine appointment! worship, as a *deist*, a God out of Christ! Wonderful concession!

perintendence, collected, numbered and placed in order; as matter of Psalmody it was given to the church, and, as such, by her used; the Book of Psalms is not a type or mere rite, but a remarkable compend of divine truth, religious; moral, historical, and an infallible exhibition of godly experience; and, as of divine appointment for Psalmody in particular, so for other religious purposes in general, it passed from the temple and synagogue of the old economy, into the church of the new dispensation; in every age it has been highly valued by the enlightened and spiritually minded, as containing fit matter, and in proper order, for her Psalmody; in it are psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, for the use of which in Psalmody, we have a divine command, Col. iii. 16; for the *specific* use of it in Psalmody, we have precisely the same kind of argument and of authority that we have for the canonical authority of the Bible, or any part of the Bible for general religious use; the proof from internal and external evidence in both cases is similar. The argument that would set aside the book of Psalms from its specific place in Psalmody, would go far to undermine the canonical authority of the Bible, or any part of the Bible, as a rule in any specified case of religion or morality. The good men who used such arguments meant not so, and seem to have been unaware of the tendency of their reasoning. For the authority of this book, in Psalmody, we have the same

evidence that we have for its being of divine authority at all.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS TO THE PURPOSES OF SACRED PRAISE, furnishes me with a second argument for its continuance. Have we beheld the glory of God? Are we desirous of celebrating his perfections, that are so illustriously displayed in his creative and providential works? This inspired book presents us with a suitable song: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses—He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge,"* &c. And how inimitably fine the descriptions of Divine Providence are in the 104th and 107th, and other Psalms, need not be told to the man of taste and piety.

Would we sing the frailty and sorrows of man? His frailties are described with a master's hand: "His days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away."† His woes are

* Ps. xxxiii. and xix.

† See Psalms xc. ciii. cix. 23, cxliv. 4.

delineated with the pen of sorrow. In Zion's elegiac lines, flow such tears of affliction as the weeping muse of Greece or Rome could never shed. The penitent sows in tears; those tears are represented as his bread and his drink; they are precious in the sight of God; he records their number in his book, and collects them in his bottle.* And never were sentiments of deep distress couched in language at once so tender and so emphatic as in the 88th Psalm. The griefs of a public spirit are expressed with a divine eloquence. Read, as a specimen of this, the 79th of this sacred collection, and then turn to the 137th, where an unparalleled group of the tenderest sentiments, and most affecting imagery will be found. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down: yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."

Would we, in the song we sing to God, dilate on the grace of the Spirit, and on their varied actings? Would we sing the humbling and the elevating exercises of the saint? These are themes which enter largely into the composition, and constitute no small share of the beauty of our Bible Psalms. They have, too, this advantage above others; they are delineated with infallible correctness.

Is it our wish to embrace in our song the distinguishing blessings of salvation? These are found in our divine odes. The grace of God in

* Ps. lvi. 8, lxxx. 5, and cxxvi. 5.

election,* in redemption,† in pardon,‡ in communion,§ is sung in these inspired verses. Here, likewise, the saint finds assurance of safety in the vale of death, and of victory over the grave, together with the enjoyment of eternal life.|| These, and their kindred blessings, give form and vitality to the whole system of scripture song.

Do the sufferings of the Son of God, by which he purchased his church and his triumph over the powers of death, occupy our attention? Do we wish to make these the subject of our praise? Where are they sung in strains so melting, or in notes of such elevated sentiment, and expressive diction, as in the book of Psalms? There we find the language he selected, when, suspended upon the cross, he suffered for us the Father's wrath: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—Into thine hand I commit my spirit."¶ There, too, we have his triumphal song: "God is gone up with a shout—Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."** Would we sing his victorious march in the spread of the gospel? All the language in which it is described is flat, compared with that which the Holy Ghost employs:

* Ps. lxxv. 4.

§ Ps. xxvii. 4.

† Ps. xxxix. 22, and cxxx. 7, 8.

|| Ps. xxiii. and xvi.

‡ Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, and ciii. 3.

¶ Ps. xxii. 1, and xxxi. 5.

** Ps. lxxviii. 18.

“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness—Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth—The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed—All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”*—Would we sing the awful scenes at the close of time? “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.—God is judge himself.” Then to his saints will he “show the path of life; in his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.” Then, too, “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”† Thus, there is no attribute of Jehovah which is not celebrated; no gift of grace which is not confessed; no devout emotion of the heart which is not described, nor achievement of the Saviour which is not sung, in the impressive language of the Holy Ghost.

I know, indeed, it has been said that the preacher feels regret in being confined to inspired Psalms; that, after he had delivered a gospel sermon, he could find no song by which he could, with propri-

* Ps. xlv. 3, 4; xvi. 10, and xviii. 2, 3, &c.

† Ps. l. and xvi. and ix.

ety, close the solemnities of the day. May we not venture to express our suspicion respecting those who talk at this rate, that their acquaintance with the scripture songs must be shamefully superficial; or, that they preach *another gospel* than that of the blessed God? For certain it is, that thousands, in different ages, have, with great faithfulness, ability and success, preached the gospel of Christ, without feeling any difficulty in selecting a Scripture Psalm appropriate to the occasion.

I am not so fortunate as to remember any specifications on this subject. The declarations, it is believed, are general; and so calculated to cover a defective information, or something not quite so excusable. We shall rest this point till gentlemen of candour specify the particulars in which the Scripture Psalms are either defective in matter suitable for Christian Psalmody, or contain matter unsuitable to the purpose of evangelical worship. Only let them be careful not to occupy a ground that would exclude all social praise from the sanctuary of God. It is to be suspected that complaints of this stamp originate not from defect, or what is unfit in scripture songs, but from a vitiated taste in spiritual things. It requires more than unsupported assertion, or mere declamation, to satisfy the mind of him who wishes to give a reason of his hope that the songs of inspiration are not fit, as to matter, or not ample, as to variety, for all the purposes of evangelical praise. It is pity, in-

deed, that any Christian should be found who does not prefer the infallible dictates of the Spirit of grace, to the imperfect, however well intended, effusions of fallible men.

Take, then, this inspired book; it conveys the balm of consolation to the afflicted heart, directs the emotions of the child of grace, teaches a due estimate of a world of sin and sorrow, cherishes a living hope in a living Redeemer, and furnishes a guide and support for that faith by which the Christian lives. Here you find concentrated the light of inspired truth, whence its beams ray out on the night of time—It pours a flood of day on the vale of death, dissipating its gloom, banishing its terrors, and giving a joyous prospect of the happy regions that lie beyond. Study the other pages of the Book of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly—a knowledge of it will enable you to understand and to apply this sacred manual of inspired song; but exchange it not for light and lifeless poetry of erring man. This leads me to

My third argument: **THE SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE OF INSPIRED PSALMS.** It is not my design to derogate from the merit of any man's productions. Claim for them all the respect you justly can; still they are human. The structure is the work of man, and must be imperfect. The sentiment must be comparatively feeble, the views narrow, and the thought shallow. Will not the effect be proportionably superficial? the effect cannot be more per-

fect than its cause. Is it not likewise to be expected that man's moral imperfections will tinge his fairest works? But how highly elevated, above all this, is the character of the living word of God in Zion's inspired songs! There we find unspotted purity; the holiness of God transcribed. In those compositions is depth of thought, fulness of meaning, and an energy which evinces their divine original. It is not merely the lighter powers of the mind that these address, nor the transient affections of the heart, which they awaken. The harp, the organ, the well-modulated voice, are all adequate to the production of such effects. The language of inspiration does more. It seizes the mind, arrests the understanding, subjugates the will, purifies the conscience, elevates and regulates the affections, and transforms into its own image the whole man. Who dare venture to assert these things of the best productions of uninspired men?

The Christian will not forget that the Book of Psalms was dictated by the Spirit of God, and contains very remarkable exhibitions of his diversified operations on the human heart, in the various circumstances in which he places or finds the saint. And, if he say he esteems more highly the Psalms, which are the production of the Spirit that sanctifies him, than he does the imperfect works of feeble man,—let not his more liberal neighbour, who professes to see no difference between them, or, perhaps, who prefers the latter, brand his charac-

ter with the odious appellation of bigot. The preference of the one may have more of the semblance of modern liberality; that of the other has not less of the character of ancient piety. I hold myself justified in choosing the best version of inspired compositions, rather than the most perfect effusions of uninspired man.*

* Milton, whose genius, it is somewhere said, "might have harmoniously mingled with the angels that announced the Messiah to be come," makes one of the devices of Satan against the Saviour, an attempt to turn his attention to

"Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,"

rather than to the hymns, and psalms, and Hebrew songs of inspiration. And the language by which he represents the Redeemer repelling the assault, is applicable, not only to the productions of the Grecian muse, but to all human composesures, when put in competition with the word of God :

"Remove their swelling epithets, thick laid
As varnish on a harlot's cheek ; the rest
Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,
Will far be found unworthy to compare,
With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
Where God is praised aright ———
Such are from God inspired."—*Par. Reg.* B. 4.

He needs to be but slightly acquainted with the hymn books of the day, to perceive an affected air of familiarity, in addressing, or in speaking of, the Redeemer of men; which is as inconsistent with the dignity of worship, as with reverence. It is the cant of enthusiasm, which is equally abhorrent to good sense, and devout feeling. Of such the Princeton Review says:—"Hymns unsuitable for the worship of God—mere sentimental effusions—objectionable from the lightness of their measure—others for their want of all poetic excellence." And as said by others—"Deficient in literary merit—incorrect in doctrine—unsuitable for the sanctuary as songs of praise, for want of suitable sentiments."

THERE IS NOT INDUBITABLE EVIDENCE OF THE PROPRIETY OF USING HUMAN COMPOSURES IN THE PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH. This is my fourth reason. And I hesitate more, when I *uniformly* see the admission of such exclude those of the Spirit's inditing.

We should not venture, if a pure offering be in our power, to present to God one of doubtful character. The denunciations of divine displeasure against those who do so, should not be forgotten.* We are sure the language of inspiration, furnished us by God himself, will not be unacceptable in our offerings to him. But are we certain, after our rejection of his, that our own will find, before him, a gracious acceptance? When God furnishes us with words for a special purpose, let us prefer them to all others. The Redeemer of souls, at a most interesting crisis of his mediation, poured forth the addresses of his heart in the language of the Book of Psalms.

With that which is doubtful, in the worship of God, we should not venture. He pronounces himself a *jealous God*. I know, indeed, that the thoughtless temerity of the spirit of innovation, is not likely to be deterred in its progress, by fear of divine disapprobation:

“For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

There is usually, in such cases, the prevalence of some powerful passion, the boisterousness of

* Mal. i. 14.

whose rage drowns, for the time, the suggestions of caution, and, not unfrequently, the authoritative voice of God himself. Until the storm shall have subsided, and the charm of novelty ceased to captivate, it is vain to hope, that attention will be seriously turned to a diligent comparison of such courses with the word of God. There is, notwithstanding, entertained a confident hope, that the time in which impious license has been taken with the Book of Psalms, has nearly expired. Whether there be danger of a corruption of worship, in the instance before us, or a ground of charge for taking away any portion of the word of God from its appointed use, deserves the careful inquiry of all concerned.

The Holy One of Israel has encircled his institutions with a solemnity which prohibits profane intrusion. *The whole limit of his mountain is most holy.* Hear what he says, and lay it to heart:—“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.† This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.‡ But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.§

* Deut. xii. 32.

† Prov. xxx. 6.

‡ Isa. xxix. 13.

§ Mat. xv. 9.

Why are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?"* Whatever show of wisdom there may be in such, the church's Head pronounces it *will-worship*, and dishonourable to God, as well as dangerous to us: for, saith "the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star—I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book."†

These scriptures impressively teach the danger of encroachment on the instituted ordinances of God. Upon no individual do we presume to sit in judgment; we speak for ourselves, and without offence to any may be allowed to give utterance to our own impressions, as to the import of those awful admonitions. From them, and other portions which speak a similar language, we learn, that in matters of religious worship, it is not sufficient authority for a practice, that it is not expressly forbidden. The worshipper should be prepared to answer, in a satisfactory manner, should God propose to him the question, *Who hath required this at your hand?* It will not be satisfac-

* Col. ii. 20—22.

† Rev. xxii. 16, 18, 19.

tory to say, "The Lord has not explicitly prohibited such observances." Were this plea of justification admissible, Rome might add rites innumerable to her already cumbrous load, and, at the bar of God, stand acquitted in her impious impositions. Jehovah's prohibitory law is express; *Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.**

On this subject we have more than mere verbal prohibitions. To succeeding ages, God has set up actual monuments of instruction, and of warning. The fact of Nadab and Abihu is full in point. In their character, there does not appear to have been any intentional opposition to the institutions of God. Thoughtlessly, perhaps, they brought, instead of the sacred fire from the altar, common fire from the hearth. This appears to have been a very trivial deviation from the appointed order; but it was a deviation; and God, by an alarming stroke, taught Israel that he would be sanctified in them that approached to worship him, by a punctilious regard to every part of his institutions.† The death of UZZAH‡ impresses on the mind a similar lesson. The apparent smallness of the deviation, and purity of intention, never, in the sight of God, consecrated an invasion of his prerogative, the exclusive right of settling the matter and the forms of his own worship. Uzzah was pious, and being actuated by a very laudable motive, the safety of the ark of God, he took hold of it. But this was not

* Deut. xii. 32.

† Lev. x. 1—3.

‡ 2 Sam. vi. 6. 7.

required of him, and his life was forfeited by his devout temerity. God is still the same; strange fire, and the intrusion of an unhallowed hand upon his ark, are as offensive now as formerly they were. *His glory he will not give to another.** Whether are those who use the Scripture Psalms, or those who employ our multiplied hymn books, in the worship of God, most in danger, in the case of Psalmody, of unwarrantable innovation? Let this be a question, not of disputation, but of conscientious inquiry.

Upon no rite, institution, or truth, will the enlightened Christian lay an undue weight; but he will try to give each that importance which it deserves. In the present state of man, forms are as necessary to the public expression of the devotions of the heart, as are the body and its members to the soul, in the actions of life. The question then is, shall we take forms of our own device, or, shall we be contented with what God has given? *Moses was faithful in all his house.* He acted according to prescription, and ventured not to add, or to diminish. The singing of the Almighty's praise, in compositions of inspiration, is an appointment of God; the doing so, in human composesures, is not a divine ordinance. It *has not* been proved to be God's institution. Hear, then, the prohibition, and apply it, *Touch not the unclean thing.* This affects not the use of any scripture song.

* Isa. xlii. 8.

THE ARGUMENTS EMPLOYED TO SET ASIDE THE BOOK OF PSALMS, FROM ITS PLACE IN THE PSALMODY OF THE CHURCH, ARE NOT ONLY UNSATISFACTORY, BUT FREQUENTLY IMPIOUS. This is my fifth reason for the continued use of scripture songs. To such arguments we would not *seem*, even, to give a sanction. Bad arguments are presumptive proof that the cause they subserve is not good. When a style of reasoning, inconsistent with the due reverence for the sacred writings, is *uniformly* adopted to recommend a measure, we ought to doubt the propriety of that measure. For a hundred years past, have the advocates of a *new Psalmody* spoken a language, in vindicating it, which is afflictive to hear. What say you, brethren of the cause, intellect, and moral feeling, of those who could speak, and write, in the manner stated below?*

* In order to recommend his imitation and hymns to public regard, Dr. Watts used the following language:—"Our psalmody—does not only *flatter* our devotion, but too often awakens our regret, and touches all the springs of uneasiness within us. I have been long convinced, that one great occasion of this evil arises from the *matter* and words to which we confine all our songs. Some of them are *almost opposite* to the spirit of the gospel. Hence it comes to pass, that when spiritual affections are excited within us, and our souls are raised a little above this earth, in the beginning of a psalm, we are *checked on a sudden in our ascent towards heaven*, by some expressions that are—fit only to be sung in the *worldly sanctuary*. When we are just entering into an evangelical frame—the very next *line*—which the clerk parcels out unto us, hath something in it so *extremely Jewish and cloudy*, that it *darkens our sight of God the Saviour*. Thus by keeping too close to David in the house of God,

be recollected, that when Dr. Watts wrote the preface to his hymns, the book of Psalms was used in the churches.

the *vail of Moses is thrown over our hearts*. While we are kindling into divine love—some *dreadful curse* against men is proposed to our lips; as, Ps. lxi. 26—28; which is *so contrary* to the new commandment of loving our enemies. *Some sentences* of the Psalmist—may compose our spirits to seriousness, but we meet with a following line, that *breaks off our song* in the midst; our consciences *are affrighted*, lest we should speak a *falsehood* unto God; thus the powers of our souls are *shocked* on a sudden, and our spirits *ruffled*—it almost always spoils the devotion—Our lips speak *nothing but the heart of David*. Thus our hearts are, as it were, forbid the pursuit of the song, and then the harmony and the *worship grow dull of necessity*. Many ministers, and private Christians, have long *groaned* under this inconvenience—there are a *thousand lines* in it—the book of Psalms—which were not made for a church in our days to assume as its own—I should rejoice to see—*David converted into a Christian*: but because I cannot persuade others to attempt this *glorious work*, I have suffered myself to be persuaded to begin it.”* Having finished the Imitation of the Psalms, by which he proposed to *convert David into a Christian*, the Doctor says, “If an author’s opinion may be taken, he esteems it the greatest work that ever he has published, or ever hopes to do, for the use of the churches.”*

“There are *many hundred verses* in that book, (of Psalms) which a Christian cannot properly assume in singing—as Ps. lxxviii. 13, 16, and lxxxiv. 3, 6.”—“Ps. lxi. 28, and Ps. cix. are *so full of cursings*, that they hardly become the tongue of a follower of the blessed Jesus.”†

“By that time they are *fitted* for Christian Psalmody—the composure can hardly be called *inspired or divine* ‡—I could never persuade myself that the best way to raise a devout frame

* Watt’s Pref. Glasgow Ed. 1786.

† Essay on Psalmody, Works, Vol. 7, pp. 7, 8.

‡ Ibid. p. 10.

Upon the sentiments quoted in the margin, I shall make but little comment. Did they not live in the writings of the authors, and alas! constitute

in plain Christians, was to bring a *king* or *captain*, into our churches, and let him *lead*, and *dictate* the worship in *his own* style of royalty, or in the *language of a field of battle.*”* “I have collected and disposed the *most useful* verses of this Psalm, (119th. See the note before it in the Imitation)—But the verses are much transposed, to attain *some degree* of connexion.”—Such were the sentiments, and such is the language of Dr. Watts, concerning the book of Psalms. Hear another advocate of human inventions :

“If we were to adhere strictly to the Old Testament Psalmody, we cannot be said *to do any thing* in the name of the Lord Jesus, much less to give thanks unto God and the Father, by him. No mention is therein made of the Father as a distinct and special object of our devotion, nor of the Son, as being the appointed way of our access to him.†—Whether these Psalms (*mentioned*, 1 Cor. xiv. 26,) were the effect of previous study and inspiration united, or of immediate suggestion, they were *certainly not designed* to inspire them (the converts to the gospel) *with veneration*‡ and *respect* for the Psalms of David.”§ “Any person—will quickly perceive how *remote* psalms and hymns, formed upon it (the orthodox Nicene creed) would be from the—*doctrine* of the Old Testament.”|| “Nor do I think (the introduction of the Psalms of David into the Christian church) was very honourable to the cause of Christ. It deprived him of—divine honour—It deprived the asserters of his deity of *all* opportunity of bearing testimony to it in that part of their worship—It decided *clearly* in favour of that tenet of Arianism, that divine worship was to be paid only to the Father, and so had a *direct ten-*

* Preface to the Imitation, Works, Vol. 7, p. 24.

† Author of Discourse on Psalmody, p. 29.

‡ “What books are those,” said the persecutor Saturninus, “which you read and *revere*? Speratus replied—All the scripture that is inspired of God.”—*Milner*. The martyrs then *reverted* the Psalms of David.

§ Discourse on Psalmody, p. 42.

|| *Ibid.* p. 51.

the animating principle of that rage for “the meretricious ornaments” of a light and lifeless poetry, which has nearly banished an inspired Psalm Book from the church of God, I would not have permitted them a place in my pages. You, brethren, friends of the Bible, and advocates of its reputation, would not patiently listen to those slanders, by which it is misrepresented. Yet, indelicate, and—can you find a softer epithet than irreverent?—if you can, use it, and I return, and repeat—*indelicate* as are these rhapsodies, they enter into the special pleadings by which Dr. Watts introduced to notice his productions, and by which the friends of his scheme have supported it.

Of the Book of Psalms, in a literal and faithful version then in use, he says:—It *flattens* devotion—he speaks not of the form of translation, but of the *matter*—some of the Psalms in spirit and matter, as *almost opposite to the spirit of the gospel*—on a sudden checking our ascent towards heaven—darkening our sight of God the Saviour—*proposing* to our lips some *dreadful curse against men*—affrighting the conscience, lest in the language of his own

dency—to make heresy triumphant!!!” “This usage spread—and it is no wonder that it spread speedily and extensively in the fourth century, an age devoted to Arianism.”* Listen to another:

“About this time (fourth century) the Psalms of David were *first introduced*. They were brought in by *Arians, and not by orthodox Christians*—spread extensively—The principal reason was, because this century became devoted to Arianism.”†

* Discourse on Psalmody, p. 77.

† Freeman, p. 15.

book, we should speak a falsehood unto God—ruffling the spirit—spoiling devotion—causing our lips to speak nothing but the *heart of David*—causing the worship to grow dull of necessity—so full of cursings that they hardly become the tongue of a Christian. This language is incapable of sound explanation. In no connexion can it be justified. It never ought to have been used. The fearful temerity of the language of his followers respecting the book of Psalms, and the false views of the religion of the Old Testament church which most of them give, are of dangerous tendency. How could Christian men thus speak and deliberately write?

Yet Dr. Watts, with all the imposing forms of his sanctity, spoke as we have heard of his own and of inspired compositions. With his piety I have nothing to do. I hope it will be found, that he was really devout, and that, like others of the redeemed, he, through the blood of the cross, was pardoned and accepted by that God of whose word he so lightly spoke. Most willingly would I seek an apology for his modesty, and his reverence of God. But where is it to be found? Shall we have recourse to bodily infirmities, or, to that mental imbecility, from which so few partakers of frail humanity are exempt? But while this admission of charity shields his motives, it condemns the madness of his project. I cannot, however, be persuaded to extend the admission so far as to allow, that those multitudes who have entered into the views of the Doctor, were equally under the influ-

ence of hypochondriacal affections. And, if they were, would it not be accommodating their caprice too far, to indulge them, without animadversion, to banish from her solemn praise the inspired hymns of Zion?

Are you prepared to admit, that, “if we adhere to the book of Psalms, we cannot be said *to do any thing* in the name of the Redeemer?” Did, then, a strict adherence to the doctrines of this book, which so abundantly testifies of Christ, lead the worshipper to an absolute God—a consuming fire? Was not Messiah, since the fall of man, the only way to the Father? “Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?”* Who of them was ever, in person, or in worship, accepted through any name but that of Christ?† Did they not, under every economy, contemplate him as *wounded for their transgressions*? In their sacrificed victims, devout worshippers, by faith, beheld *Messiah*, the Christ, *cut off, but not for himself*.‡

It is remarkable how these writers could, in various forms, repeat that “there is no distinct mention of the Father in the book of Psalms as a distinct and special object of devotion.” Had an aversion to this book prevented them from reading the second Psalm? Who is it that says, *Thou art my son*? And to whom is the address made? Yes,

* Job v. 1.

† Acts iv. 12.

‡ Isa. liii. 5. Dan. ix. 26. Ps. xl. 6, 7.

yes; the doctrine of the Trinity was well known to the approved worshippers of God from the first, and is very distinctly exhibited in many a Psalm.* And was, as these advocates say, “the Son, as the way to the Father, unknown to the ancient saints?” We hope the time is rapidly passing away when such things shall be believed. Enoch, a contemporary with Adam, prophesied of the Saviour†—Abraham saw his day, and was glad‡—Job spoke of his Redeemer, whom he knew, with the precision of a New Testament writer§—Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt||—David describes him in his sufferings, in his exaltation, and in his dispensations, in these divine songs,¶ which, I fear, an unhappy prejudice has prevented some masters in our Israel from understanding. And yet, wonderful to tell, these saints knew nothing of this personage, as the way to the Father! Did these writers understand that Confession which they subscribed, and were they sincere when they professed to believe its articles, and vowed to teach its doctrines? This document teaches that “The justification of believers *under the Old Testament* was, in all respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the *New Testament*.”** This sym-

* See Ps. ii., viii., xlv., li., cx., &c. § Job xix. 25—27.

† Jude 14.

|| Heb. xi. 26.

‡ John viii. 56.

¶ Ps. xxii., lxviii., xc., xcvi., &c.

** Conf. of the Presby. Church, chap. xi.

bol, in the same chapter, teaches that "Faith, receiving and resting upon Christ and his righteousness, is the *alone* instrument of justification." But, when a point is to be gained, subscriptions, vows, consistency, and truth, all in unison, oppose too frequently, but a feeble obstacle to the unhallowed passions of imperfect man.

How bitterly is it to be lamented that ministers of the word of God should vituperate a most interesting portion of that word! Holding it forth as *depriving the Son of God of divine honour—directly tending to make heresy triumphant—as favourable to Arianism, and as properly suited to such a perversion of truth!* By such vituperation the Imitation and hymns of Dr. Watts have been forced upon the unwary; and, so far as a defence of the usurpation is undertaken, it is made by the same weapons. Say, ye who fear God, and tremble at his word, is not the cause a *desperate* one that—I shall not say requires, but that *tolerates* such support? To be told all this, to hear it repeated, and to see it presented in varied forms, by men occupying the place of ministers in the church of the Lord, and eulogized by others, and remain unmoved, would argue a species of apathy, by which no virtuous mind should wish to be characterized. If from another quarter it would call forth a well-tempered indignation; as it is, grief takes the place of indignation, and expresses itself in the tears of affliction.

These sentiments, indeed, appear to carry us so far beyond the regions where mistaken saints are wont to stray, that, when I read them, I imagine myself on the confines of infidelity. *Has the "Age of Reason" spoken more reproachfully of the book of Psalms than these writings which I now review?* The opinions are so often repeated, turned up in so many forms, and appear in so many connexions, that we are forbidden to ascribe them to a *lapsus calami*, an oversight in composition. Is it not their direct tendency to corrupt the mind, and shake the public faith in the inspired page? If, indeed, any portion of the book of Psalms have such tendencies as have been ascribed to it, ought it not to be torn from our Bibles, and excluded from our churches? Tell me, is it not dangerous to *read*, as well as to *sing*, those portions of Scripture that "darken our sight of God the Saviour?—that tend to give heresy a triumph, and that were *properly suited* to a perversion of truth?" Was it well done to *imitate* such a book? If the original be so dangerous, can the *imitation* be safe? By what rule shall we know those portions of the *word of God*, that have such evil tendency from those parts that are still profitable? And how account for the fatal omission of the great Prophet of the church, and of his inspired messengers, in never hinting to us these dangers from the use of the book of Psalms? These perplexing questions crowd upon us: they should have been obviated by those

Evangelical Illuminati, who have cast such a shade of doubt on this venerable book, which prophets composed, which apostles admired, and which saints in every age have most devoutly sung.

That such sentiments were indulged, among any of the professed disciples of Christianity, even in the heat of angry controversy, can be accounted for only by the fact already mentioned,—the progress of infidelity. The period when the opinions of Watts were broached, was the age in which the publications of Herbert, Shaftsbury, and Bolingbroke, came abroad, recommended by the fascinations of wit, of eloquence, and a pretension to lofty thought. From causes already mentioned, it was the age, too, of extinguished zeal, and little scriptural religion. The flood-gates of infidelity were raised, the torrent increased, and, in its impetuous course, carried public opinion along. Its deadly waters washed our shores. Untaught to confide in ourselves, and to draw upon our own resources, we depended as much on Europe for the opinions we should entertain, as for the robes we should wear. Political revolutions unsettle the public mind, lead to connexions unknown before, and afford facilities for the active apostles of error to accomplish their designs. The history of our times, and of our country, amply verifies this remark.

When the controversy of which we now treat, was first agitated in this country, the imposing

port assumed by infidelity may be well remembered, while as a monster it stalked our streets. That was the "Age of Reason." The public ear was familiarized to the supposed contradictions of the word of God. But now that these tumultuous waters are assuaged, that the reign of infidelity has ended, and that we live in the age of Bibles, when every one seems ready to atone for the wanderings of other years, I cannot persuade myself that, upon serious reflection, the real friend of the word of God will suffer any portion of it to remain under the unblessed charge of "checking us in our ascent to heaven—darkening our views of God the Saviour, or of directly tending to make heresy triumphant!" Let them, then—it is devoutly hoped they will—restore the book of Psalms to its legitimate place in the solemnities of the sanctuary. While such declarations, as those we have noticed, stand prominently on record against this sacred book, let us not give it up, *lest we be understood to give them the sanction of our approbation*. Let it be retained where it is, and be brought back where it is not, till something more satisfactory than animated declamation shall be adduced against it; and till the Spirit of inspiration, in his future efforts, shall have surpassed in excellence what he has already done.

To induce to this, at the present day, it is not necessary to dilate on the testimony of New Testament writers, in favour of the evangelical character

of the book of Psalms. A reference to what has already been said is deemed sufficient; and, were human authority deemed requisite, we might produce that of the whole church of God in former times: for, in no age of her existence, except that of INFIDEL REASON, did any of her sons venture to speak in the style on which we have animadverted. The testimony of a few moderns of reputation, from among many others no less respectable, may not be deemed impertinent.

The first I adduce is that of the late Dr. Horne. "David's invaluable Psalms," says he, "convey those comforts to others which they afforded to himself.—They present religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths to us which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal.—Indited under the influence of Him, to whom all hearts are known and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations.—He who hath once tasted their excellencies will desire to taste them again, and he who tastes them oftenest will relish them best."* Much more hath the Doctor finely spoken to the same purpose.

My next witness is Dr. Scott, a man who feels, as well as writes of the "Force of Truth."—"There is nothing," says this excellent man, "in true religion, doctrinal, experimental and practical, but will present itself to our attention while we meditate upon the Psalms. And hardly an occasion of

* Pref. to his Comment.

praise and thanksgiving can be conceived, to which some portion of them, *faithfully* rendered in poetical versions, may not be applied with peculiar energy and propriety: and indeed the Christian's use of them in the closet, and the minister's in the pulpit, will generally increase with the *growing experience of the power of true religion in their own hearts.*"*

I next adduce the sentiments of the Rev. Robert Davidson, D. D., late professor in, and for a time at the head of, Dickinson College. He was a reputable minister of the Presbyterian church. "Do Christians," inquires the Doctor, "feel it their duty to celebrate the attributes of the adorable Jehovah, and to praise him for his wonderful works of creation, providence, and redemption?—Do they delight to dwell on the precious promises of God to men, especially the promises of life and salvation through a Redeemer?—Do they wish to repeat hymns that express in a lively manner all the various affections of a pious mind in all the different circumstances of life,—in scenes of trouble and in scenes of joy?—What can be better adapted to all these purposes than the book of Psalms,—the production of the pens of inspired prophets of ancient times? Had the author been disposed to omit any of this most valuable collection, he would not have known where to begin."† But quo-

* Scott's Pref. to the Psalms.

† Pref. to his version of the Psalms.

tations of this description would be endless. I add only another:

“Of all the books of the Old Testament,” says Dr. Horsley, “the book of Psalms is the most universally read; but, I fear, as little as any understood. This cannot be ascribed to any extraordinary obscurity of these sacred songs; for of all the prophetic parts of the Scriptures they are certainly the most perspicuous. But it is owing, partly, I fear, to some *dulness* of the faculties of the natural man upon *spiritual subjects*.—There is not a page of this book of Psalms in which the *pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding him*; and it was but a just encomium of it that came from the pen of one of the early Fathers, that it is a complete system of divinity for the use and edification of the common people of the Christian church.”*

As much has been said by Dr. Watts and his followers against the book of Psalms, in the Psalmody of the church, as being in *matter* and *spirit* unfit for a place in that part of the worship of the sanctuary; as having no authority, divine or human, in that service, and, as being *Christless*. To the distinguished names above given we might add those of our ablest commentators, along with that of Scott, already given; such as Poole, Henry, Gill, and Clarke, all of whom are decided in advocating the divine appointment of the book of Psalms to

* Bp. Horsley's Pref.

be used in the Psalmody of the church under the new, as well under the Levitical economy; and they all strongly affirm the suitability of the matter for the present dispensation of mercy. Out of the number of many who thus speak, we select, in addition to those already named, the following few, whose high rank in talent, sacred literature and piety, none will be inclined to dispute; and how far their unbiassed and deliberate judgment will outweigh the rash sayings of the author of the *Imitation* of the book of Psalms, and those of the writers of the *Discourses*, *Animadversions*, and *Hints*, his followers, on that side of the question, may be left to our readers to decide. The first of those now adduced is our own illustrious Edwards. Thus he speaks:

“The oil that was used in anointing David was a type of the Spirit of God; and the type and the anti-type were given both together, as we are told, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. ‘Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.’—One way that his Spirit influenced him was by inspiring him to show forth Christ, and the glorious things of his redemption, in divine songs, sweetly expressing the breathings of a pious soul, full of the admiration of the glorious things of the Redeemer, inflamed with divine love and elevated praise; and therefore he is called the sweet Psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. The main subjects of these songs were the glorious things of the gospel, as is evident

by the interpretation that is often put upon them, and the use that is made of them in the New Testament; for there is no one book of the Old Testament that is so often quoted in the New, as the book of Psalms. Joyfully did this holy man sing of those great things of Christ's redemption, that had been the hope and expectation of God's church and people from the beginning,—and joyfully did others follow him in it, as Asaph, Heman, and others.—Here Christ is spoken of—in multitudes of songs, speaking of his *incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension* into heaven; his *satisfaction, intercession*; his *prophetical, kingly, and priestly* office; his glorious benefits in *this life* and that which is *to come*; his *union with the church*, and the *blessedness of the church in him*; his *calling of the Gentiles*, the *future glory of the church* near the end of the world, and *Christ's coming* to the *final judgment*. All these things, and many more, concerning Christ and his redemption, are abundantly spoken of in the book of Psalms.

“This was a glorious advancement of the affair of redemption, as God hereby gave his church a book of divine songs for their use in that part of their public worship, viz., singing his praise throughout *all ages to the end of the world*. It is manifest *the book of Psalms was given of God for this end*. It was used in the church of Israel *by God's appointment*.—And we find that *the same* are appointed in the New Testament to be made use of

in the Christian church, in their worship: Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16—In Psalms, hymns, and *spiritual songs*. So they have been, and will, *to the end of the world*, be made use of in the church to celebrate the praises of God. The people of God were wont *sometimes* to worship God by singing songs to his praise before, as they did at the Red Sea; and they had Moses' prophetic song, in Deut. xxxii.: committed to them for that end; and Deborah, Barak, and Hannah, sung praises to God: but now first did God commit to his church a book of divine songs for their *constant use*."*

Thus Edwards, like the apostle Paul, and, till lately, like the whole true church of God, could find, in the book of Psalms, his Redeemer, the doctrine of redemption, the church, and all that concerns the glory of God and the salvation of man. He, too, could find the suitableness and divine appointment of that book for its place in the Psalmody of the church, not upon a limited scale, but all of it and for every age. He could find the New Testament command for its continued use, in Col. iii. 16; as, when that command was given, there was no other sacred collection than that of the book of Psalms in existence, and in it were the *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, well adapted to the purposes indicated in the apostolic injunction. What a pity that so many of our modern mas-

* Edwards' Works, vol. iii. 231, 232.

ters in Israel can neither find Christ, nor his redemption, Spirit, nor *hymns*, nor *spiritual songs*, in the book of Psalms!

In soundness of mind, solidity of judgment, good common sense, candour, and personal piety, the late Andrew Fuller, D. D., was surpassed by very few, if any, of the age in which he lived. On the subject before us he speaks thus: "I have long wished to see introduced into the churches, (and I almost believe it will be at some future time,) A SELECTION OF DIVINE HYMNS OR SONGS, taking place of all *human compositions*. By divine songs or hymns, I mean the *pure word of God*, translated without any respect to rhyme or number, after the manner of Lowth's Isaiah, and set to plain, serious, and solemn music, adapted to the sentiments.—David's Psalms, why do we not set them as they are, to sacred music? It is of a thousand times more importance to preserve the spirit of a Psalm, or scripture song, than to have it in numbers, even supposing a uniformity in numbers were of advantage.—Such a sweetness and majesty is there in the poetic language of scripture, that if there were nothing offensive in the music it must needs recommend itself to a serious mind. Without disparaging the labours of any one, there is as great a disproportion between our best compositions and those of the scriptures, as between the speeches of Job and his friends, and the voice of the Almighty."*

* Fuller's Works, vol. viii. pp. 339, 340.

This is the language of good sense and piety. "What is the chaff to the wheat! saith the Lord." And as to the *manner*, the church will find Dr. Fuller's views to be sound. *A faithful and elegant version in rhyme*, or the modern metres, she has never had, and is not likely to have. *A faithful version* she has had and may have, and to that she must consent to sacrifice the modern decorations of fancy, in chiming verse.

The following are the sentiments of a Christian and a scholar, well known in Europe and America by his numerous and valuable writings. "Those sacred songs," says Dr. Thomas Dick, "which are recorded in scripture for directing the train of our devotional exercises,—contain specimens of elevated sentiments, of sublime devotion, incomparably superior to what is to be found in any other record, whether ancient or modern. But man, whose unhallowed hand *pollutes* and *degrades* every portion of revelation which he attempts to improve, has endeavoured to set aside the literal and sublime references of these divine compositions, or to substitute in their place the vague and extravagant fancies of weak and injudicious minds, for directing the devotional exercises of Christian churches." In a note the Doctor adds—"I here allude to several collections of hymns which have been introduced into the public worship of Christian societies,—many of which contain a number of vague and injudicious sentiments, and extravagant fancies,

while they entirely omit many of those subjects on which the inspired writers delight to expatiate. When a poet takes an insulated passage of scripture, and spins out a dozen stanzas *about* it, he may interweave, and most frequently does, as many fancies of his own as he pleases. Were the ideas contained in certain hymns to be painted on canvass, they would represent either a congeries of clouds and mists, or a group of distorted and unnatural objects. And why should such vague fancies, and injudicious representations, be *imposed* on a Christian assembly? What a disgrace is thrown upon Christianity, when the different sects of Christians cannot cordially join together in the *same song* of thanksgiving and praise to their common Father and Lord!"*

In vindication of the *divine authority* of the book of Psalms, in the Psalmody of the church, and the *suitableness of its matter* for that part of the worship of the New Testament sanctuary, we may refer to a name before mentioned in another connexion, of sufficient weight in what he says to set aside the avowals or allegations of all the pamphleteers on the other side of the question. He remarks—"If God would be pleased to send into the world a man who should unite the fidelity of the old version [of the book of Psalms] commonly called Rouse's, with so much poetic expression as to make it popular, it would be a rich gift to his

* Philosophy of Religion, by Thos. Dick, LL. D., pp. 190, 191.

church—a gift which, for our sins, he withholds.”* Our reference to this respectable authority, in this place, is for the establishment of the truth of the *authority*, the *excellence*, and *suitableness* of the book of Psalms in the Psalmody of the church. This is our main position; for the practical recognition of it we are solicitous. How far the able editor of the Spirit of the Nineteenth Century would agree or differ with us on collateral or subordinate points of this subject, is not now the matter of inquiry.

For a similar purpose we might draw largely upon Professor Alexander’s valuable Translation and Explanation of the book of Psalms. Dr. Alexander thus writes:—“As an inspired psalmist, and as a model and exemplar to those after him—from the days of Solomon to those of Ezra—David’s position is unique in sacred history.—His poetical and musical genius was necessary to secure his influence upon the church for ever. The result is, that no part of the Bible has been so long, so constantly, and so extensively familiar, both to Jews and Christians, as the Psalms of David. This *denominatio a potiori* is entirely correct, as all the other writers of the Psalms, excepting Moses, merely carry out and vary what had been already done by David; and as if to guard the system from deterioration, the farther we proceed the more direct and obvious is this dependence upon

* Spirit of the Nineteenth Century, vol. ii. p. 586.

David, as 'the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel,' " 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.*

Dr. A. had said before, "that these hundred and fifty pieces—Psalms—different as they are, have this in common, that they are all poetical,—that they are all lyrical, that is, songs, poems intended to be sung,—and, thirdly, they are all religious lyrics, even those which seem at first sight the most secular in theme and spirit, but which are all found on inquiry to be strongly expressive of religious feeling. In the fourth place they are all ecclesiastical lyrics, psalms or hymns, intended to be permanently used in public worship, not excepting those which bear the clearest impress of original connexion with the social, domestic, or personal relations and experience of the writers."†

Dr. Alexander has no difficulty in finding Christ in the book of Psalms, directly, in his personal and Mediatorial glories, and in union with his people in their sufferings and triumphs. And in those inspired songs he finds nothing at variance with the spirit of the gospel. In those which have been profanely represented as "cursing psalms—almost unfit to be spoken by the lips of a follower of the blessed Jesus," he finds the expression of the righteousness of God, asserting the high claims of eternal justice in the affairs of divine government. See his Notes on Psalms 2d, 35th, 69th, 109th, and others.

* Preface, pp. 14, 15.

† Ibid. p. 7.

Dr. A., while decidedly affirming the purest and most benign views of the grace of the gospel, manifests no symptom of that sickly sentimentalism which is so extensively abroad, going toward the subversion of all the claims of justice, and of moral order in the social state; and to which the unhappy views of Dr. Watts and his admirers, respecting the book of Psalms, have greatly contributed.*

Upon the general subject before us, listen to another unprejudiced witness: "These Psalms are chiefly summaries in a poetical and impressive form, of great truths and principles. In them is expressed, we may say, the very life and essence of the symbolical institutions and manifold transactions in providence,—and so expressed as to be most admirably fitted for forming the minds of all to right views and feelings concerning God, and enabling them to give due utterance to these in their exercises of devotion. But was this the character and design of the book of Psalms merely to the Old Testament church? Is it not equally adapted for the suitable expression of pious feeling, for a help to devotion, for a directory of spiritual thought and holy living, to the church of the New Testament? Is there a feature in the divine character as now

* It is a matter of thanksgiving to God, that he has raised up an Alexander to correct the unhappy exhibitions of those bad principles in religion and morals. We intend not to intimate that Dr. A. meant to correct those writers. Probably he never saw the pamphlets referred to. So much the better. A true man will speak truly and fitly.

developed in the gospel, a spiritual principle or desire in the mind of an enlightened Christian, a becoming exercise of affection or a matter of vital experience in the divine life, of which the record is not to be found in this invaluable portion of holy writ? And how could such a book have existed among the sacred writings centuries before the Christian era, but for the fact, that the old and new covenants (Economies)—were alike pervaded by the same great truths and principles? The book of Psalms, standing midway between both covenants, and serving equally to the members of each as the handmaid of a living piety, is a witness of the essential identity of their primary and fundamental ideas. There the disciples of Moses and of Christ meet as on a common ground, the one taking up, as their most natural and fitting expressions of faith and hope, the hallowed words, which the other had been wont to use in their devotions ages before, and then bequeathed as a legacy to succeeding generations of believers. So accordant are they to the better things of the dispensation that abideth, so perfectly adapted to the ways of God as exhibited in the gospel, and the spiritual life required of its professors, that they are invariably the most used and relished by those who are the most established in the grace, and most replenished with the blessing of God. Holy men were employed by God to indite these divine songs—and where in all scripture will the believer, who

‘worships in spirit and in truth,’ more readily go to find language for expressing his loftiest conceptions of God, for portraying his most spiritual and enlarged views of the character he is called to maintain, or breathing forth of his most elevated desires and feelings after divine things? So that the Psalms may well be termed, with Augustine, ‘an epitome of the whole scriptures,’—of both Testaments together, in their grand elements of truth and outlines of history. The character of this extraordinary book renders clear as noon-day the perfect identity of those great principles on which both Economies were founded as to institutions of worship, and the providential dealings respectively connected with them.”* Such are the views and sentiments of a distinguished Christian scholar and divine. Hear another.

The testimony of Dr. Chalmers is very decided in support of our views upon this subject. Speaking of the importance of the revelation of the Old Testament to the Christian, this eloquent and able advocate of truth remarks,—“The books of the former dispensation never stand to him—the Christian—in place of the rudiments of a school-boy, which he may now abandon.

“It may illustrate this whole matter, if we look to the book of Psalms, and just think of the various degrees of spirituality and enlargement with which

* Fairbairn’s Typology of Scripture, vol. i. pp. 60, 61.

the same composition may be regarded by Jewish and Christian eyes—how in the praise which waiteth for God in Zion—and in the pleasure which His servants took in her stones, so that her very dust to them was dear—and in the preference which they made of one day in His courts to a thousand elsewhere—and in the thirsting of their souls to appear before God—and in their remembrance of that time when they went to His house with the voices of joy and praise, and with the multitude that kept holyday—and when exiles from the holy city, they were cast down in spirit, and cried from the depths of their banishment in the land of Jordan—and when longing for God, in a dry and thirsty land where no water was, they followed hard after the privilege of again seeing His power and glory in the sanctuary—and in the songs of deliverance with which they celebrated their own restoration, when their bands were loosed, and their feet were set in a sure place, and they could offer their vows and their thanksgivings ‘in the courts of the Lord’s house, and in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem’—in all this a Jew might express the desires of a fainting and affectionate heart, after that ceremonial in which he had been trained, and that service of the temple which he loved; and yet, in all this, there is enough to sustain the *loftiest flights of devotion* in the mind of a Christian. There is a *weight* of expression, altogether commensurate to the *feelings*, and *ardours*, and the *ec-*

stacies of a soul exercised unto godliness. There is a something to meet the whole varied *experience of the spiritual life*, in these ages of a later and more refined dispensation. And such is the *divine skilfulness* of these compositions, that, while so framed as to suit and to satisfy the disciples of a ritual and less enlightened worship, there is not a holy and heavenly disciple of Jesus in our day, who will not perceive, in the effusions of the Psalmist, a counterpart to all the alternations of his own religious history, who will not find in his *very words*, the *fittest* vehicles for all the wishes, and sorrows, and agitations, to which his own heart is liable—and thus be taught by a writer far less advanced in spirituality than himself, the best utterance of desire for the manifestation of God's countenance; the best utterance of gratitude for the visitations of spiritual joy, the best and most expressive prayers under the distress and darkness of spiritual abandonment.

“Let us read over without any comment the whole of the 84th Psalm, and just simply ask you to consider how those very materials which form a most congenial piece of devotion for a Jew, admit of being so *impregnated* with the *life and spirit* of a higher economy, that they are able to sustain *all the views*, and to *express all the aspirations* of the *most spiritual and exercised* Christians. ‘How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!’ &c.

“We think it necessary to say thus much—lest the Old Testament should even be degraded be-

low its rightful place in your estimation. And be assured that, if you want to catch in all its height and all its celestial purity and raptures of a sustained and spiritual intercourse with Him who sitteth upon the throne, we know nothing fitter to guide your ascending way, than those *Psalms* and those prophecies, which shone at one time in a dark place; but may now, upon the earnest heed of him who attentively regards them, cause the day to dawn, and the day-star to arise in his heart.”*

Once more on this point, let us hear the accomplished editor of the works of the illustrious, profound, and spiritually-minded Owen, the Rev. William H. Goold, who thus writes: “These songs of Zion have designedly about them a universality of adaptation—a catholicity in their range of thought and sentiment, that renders them suitable to all generations of the church. Embodying the staple and abiding elements of devotion—the true mirror of Christian experience under its wide variety of aspect—the upward breathings of a heaven-born spirituality, which no change of dispensation can affect, and which, under the powers of the world to come, subdues into the unity of a common faith and fellowship all the conflicting interests of race and nation, the Psalms—on principles of adaptation easily understood, and for which the authority of inspiration can be adduced, become the me-

* Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 15, 16.

dium of sanctified emotion in all lands and to every age—the one song in the whole family of God, old in their essential spirit, not merely as the days when David struck his harp, but when Abel built his altar, and yet ever new as uttered or sung in the gushing freshness of a heart regenerated by the grace of God.”*

It is cheering to find men of solid erudition, of refined taste, and deep-toned piety, in different countries, and of different communities, unite in asserting the excellence of this portion of the sacred volume, which novices in literature and godly experience affect to despise. And whether these sentiments of a Horne, of a Horsley, of a Scott, of a Davidson, an Edwards, a Fuller, and others of a similar cast; or those of Watts and his advocates, exhibit most of the spirit of enlightened devotion, may be safely left to the friends of the Bible to decide.

But before leaving this subject, a word of apology may be deemed necessary, for dragging the foibles of eminent men to light, and disturbing the ashes of the dead, by exposing their mistakes before the world. I can reply to suggestions of this kind, with sincerity, that it is not the pleasure derived from such exposure that induces to the attempt. When accompanied with no evil consequence, I cheerfully recognise the obligation of the

* See—*Claims of the Church of Christ*, p. 4, by Rev. William H. Goold, of Edinburgh.

adage; *De mortuis nihil, nisi bonum*.* The obligation to a similar delicacy, toward the living, is as readily confessed. But if the dead, by their works, continue to vitiate the purity of divine worship, and to disturb the peace of the church of God, let them bear the blame. And if, by the ill-advised kindness of surviving friends, those men and their works be dragged from their obscurities, and be obtruded on public attention, let the forfeiture be paid by those officious friends.

Those men, on whose sentiments I have animadverted, succeeded, by their compositions, in excluding the songs of inspiration from the Psalmody of the church. It is my wish those songs should be restored. I am therefore justifiable in calling public attention to those reasons that recommended a measure which I believe to be improper; and in exposing that impious banter, which, in an age of infidelity, was too successful in effecting a practical preference of the word of man to that of God. I trust my attempt shall not be in vain. My appeal is made to Christian consistency; and it is made in a day as remarkable for liberal exertions to circulate the word of God, as a late period was for undisguised opposition to the authenticity and divine inspiration of that blessed book.†

We know that Dr. W. and his friends have said many true and fine things of the book of Psalms; and we know too that they have said many re-

* Speak no evil of the dead.

† See, on this subject Fairbairn's Typology.

proachful things of it. See their works, and the references to them pp. 121, 122 of this Apology. Without some qualifying circumstance it will not usually do to assail a reputable character. Excellencies will be acknowledged and pressed into notice; but then the *damning* BUT is introduced to do its undermining work. In this case the object was to undermine the *authority*, the *superior excellence*, and *suitableness* of this inspired Book to be used in the Psalmody of the church. Hence the language of the author of the Imitation—"By the time they" the Psalms—"are *fitted* for Christian Psalmody—the composure can hardly be called *inspired* or *divine*." Strange! the spirit of inspiration, to fit them for Christian Psalmody, must be evaporated. And then the profane representation of the use of the sacred songs of inspiration, as the introduction of a "a king or captain, into our churches, to *lead* and *dictate* the worship in *his own* style of royalty, or in the *language of a field of battle*." Such language—such reasons—accomplished the desired but wretched object. Now, as soon as those Christians who are bewildered by these representations are persuaded of the *authority*, *excellence*, and *adaptation* of the book of Psalms, for the Psalmody of the church, they will recall it to its place.

Will not, then, the genuine friend of the Bible arise; and in manly, in evangelical consistency, declare to the world, and to the church of God, that

he does not believe any portion of the *lively oracles* of the God of truth “has a tendency to make heresy triumphant,” or “that it checks us in our ascent toward heaven, throws the vail of Moses over our hearts, darkens our sight of God the Saviour, and is opposite to the spirit of the gospel?” It is time to awake from the slumber of a mere accommodating policy, and to tell the world, these are opinions you do not hold. Convince us, then, that you are sincere. Recall the book of Psalms from its exile, and restore it to its pristine honours. This will be an act of magnanimous policy, worthy the age of Bibles; an act which the Spirit of God will approve, and in which the church on earth and saints in heaven will rejoice.

THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF SUPPLYING THE PLACE OF SCRIPTURE PSALMS WITH HUMAN COMPOSITIONS, furnish a sixth reason against it. I am forbidden, by my prescribed limits, to expand the subject much farther. It requires, however, but little reflection to perceive the danger. The consequences are indeed extensively felt; and if the practice be continued, they have not yet reached their bounds.

The book of Psalms has been undervalued. A language, better fitting the lips of deists than of Christians, has been countenanced; and the church of the Redeemer, rent enough before, has been still more divided by the measure now opposed. The preference of a human to a divine book of Psalms, has led to the maintenance of opinions respecting

the dispensation and exercise of grace, under the Old Testament, totally at variance with truth, and contradictory to the public standards of the Reformation churches. It has forced the advocates of that preference to assume a position, that deprives the church of God at large of his word, as the ground of faith, except those of her members who may be learned in the original tongues, in which the Scriptures were first written. For, if as faithful a version of the Bible as can be obtained, has no claim to be called the Word of God, as some suppose, then the faith of the great majority of saints, in every age, has been built on a sandy foundation, the word of man. And, finally, the measure opens wide the door for introducing and propagating every species of heresy.

The fact, that hymns of human composition, admitted into the Psalmody of the church, tend to the corruption of religion, is scarcely deniable. Such admission, at least, demands peculiar caution. Admit them once, where shall we stop? Every fanciful scribbler who may be permitted to ascend a pulpit, and whose inflated vanity induces the belief that he is a poet, will urge the use of his hymns, "the spontaneous effusions of his affections," composed, as he may imagine, in adaptation to his discourse. Then, instead of a few females, on a particular day, like *Paulus* of *Samosata*, he may hear the whole choir, from day to day, sing his, in place of the praises of God.

Examine the hymn books of the respective communities, which have laid aside the Bible Psalms, and you will find their peculiar tenets interwoven with their song. According to present sentiments and practice, it is generally in the power of every minister to adopt into his congregation what hymn books he may deem meet; and thus employ, if unsound in principle, a powerful mean of seduction from the path of truth. With what heart, with what kind of faith, can the worshipper, in such a state of things, enter the house of God? At this day, in many churches, there is no certainty in what collection your song of praise shall be found: whether it shall be strictly Calvinistic in sentiment, or replete with all the horrors, and all the nonsense, of the high-toned Hopkinsian school; whether, in it, these shall be qualified by an admixture of more truth, or whether it shall be a mere evanescent effusion, depends on circumstances the most uncertain, to the majority of worshippers. This is an unhappy state of things: for it a remedy should be speedily sought.

It would be worth while to spend some labour to ascertain what has been actually done in this way to corrupt religious opinion. The inquirer should go back to a date more ancient than the present age. As respects our own country, it is peculiarly interesting. It has been said, that "the city of God presented no street of purer gold than the New England church." It is now, at best, like the feet

of the prophetic image, a mixture, "part of iron and part of clay." *How is the gold become dim!* Had the sentiments of Dr. Watts, on the doctrine of the Trinity, and his unhallowed language respecting the book of Psalms, both of which were sent abroad about the same time, any influence in opening the door for Socinianism? The Doctor's system was a compound of Sabellianism and Arianism. His system not only denies the *eternal Sonship* of Jesus Christ, but also his Deity, as he is a person distinct from the Father. The acute and profound President *Edwards* has, in a number of arguments, refuted this heresy of Dr. Watts, and at the same time shown that it destroys a belief in the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. According to Watts' hypothesis, it is a trinity of names, or of attributes, or principles, united in one individual person, and not of persons in one essence.*

Did Dr. Watts attempt, directly or indirectly, to transfuse his peculiar views on this subject into his religious poetry? Considering the strong propensity of man to propagate his sentiments, it would indeed be strange, if he did not attempt it. It is a fact, not admitting of doubt, that where his compositions were first, and have been longest used, in the Psalmody of the church, Socinianism has made the most extensive progress. Error has its power as well as truth, and, like it, presses to consistency. Dr. Watts rejected the Bible doctrine of the Tri-

* See Appendix, No. 1.

nity. His Imitation and Hymns, with all their perfections and imperfections, were adopted in the Psalmody of many churches, to the exclusion of scripture songs: among those churches the Socinian heresies have extensively spread.—What is the connexion in New England, between these works of Dr. Watts, and the existing opposition to orthodox doctrine? I leave this question to be answered by those whom it more immediately concerns. Whatever others may imagine, to me it seems deserving of attention.* God once said of Ephraim, *He is joined to his idols, let him alone.* In avenging sin, he frequently punishes spiritual crime with spiritual plagues. “My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts; and they walked in their own counsels.”†

These, brethren, are a summary of the reasons

* The progress of error is gradual, and often the avowed friends of truth prepare the way for heresy. The present extensive denial of the *eternal Sonship* of Jesus Christ, is to be viewed in this light. Destroy the faith of the church in the eternity of his filiation, and she will soon deny the eternity of his person. The metaphysical acumen of most professors will not enable them to distinguish between *sonship* and *personality*. The standards of the Presbyterian churches teach, that “the Son is eternally begotten of the Father,” and that the *personal property* of the Son is, to be begotten of the Father. Destroy the *personal property*, and you destroy the *person*. If the *personal property* be not eternal, the *person* is not eternal. Establish the former, and the latter will follow of course.

† Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12.

by which I justify the continued use of inspired songs, in the Psalmody of the church, in preference to human compositions, however excellent. We have seen that they were given to the church of God by his own authority, and were used with his approbation. The Redeemer, and his inspired messengers, instead of abrogating their use, did, by numerous circumstances, whose language is not easily misunderstood, recommend them to our respect and pious veneration.—The matter of these songs is divine, and admirably adapted to the purpose of evangelical praise.—They are better than the best compositions of uninspired men; they are the word of God,—and have been always dear to the saints.—The propriety of using hymns of human composition, in the sanctuary of God, to say the least, is doubtful. The most prominent advocates of such hymns, in recommending them, and in vindicating their claims, have spoken reproachfully of an important portion of the sacred Word. The tendency of their admission, too, is most unpropitious to the purity of religion, and the peace of the house of God.

L E T T E R V.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

SCRIPTURE OUR ONLY RULE—COL. III. 16 CONSIDERED—DEMANDS ANSWERED—NEW MERCIES REQUIRE A NEW SONG—BOOK OF PSALMS ABROGATED—CANNOT BE SUNG IN TRUTH—MAY SING AS WELL AS PRAY IN OUR OWN WORDS—BOOK OF PSALMS OBSCURE—INADEQUATE—MODERN HYMNS MORE FAVOURABLE TO REVIVALS—MORE ELEGANT IN DICTION—WATTS HAD AS GOOD A RIGHT TO MAKE PSALMS AS DAVID—CURSING PSALMS—CHRIST NOT NAMED IN THEM.

DEAR BRETHREN :—That “the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the *only rule* to direct us how we may glorify God, and enjoy him for ever,” is an article of the Protestant creed. In matters of faith and religious worship, *to the law and to the testimony*, our appeal is made. By the decision of the Holy Ghost, speaking in and by the Scriptures, is the claim of the Book of Psalms sustained, to its place in the Psalmody of our Zion. This is enough; it matters little what ingenuity may be displayed in order to set aside that decision; upon it the faith of the Christian should repose. Those who contend for its banishment, and the adoption of its rivals, can be justified only by “passages of Scripture which contain direct *precept*, plain undoubted *example*; or at least some

established *principle*, from which their conclusion necessarily flows.—We cannot be contented with gratuitous assumptions, or ingenious analogies, which have nothing to support them but human authority. We must have a warrant, decided and clear; a warrant which would be *indubitable* and *satisfactory*, if all books, excepting the Bible, were banished from the church.”* Such is the demand; such are the sentiments of a fine writer, when contending against the claims of Episcopacy. I adopt them as mine, when contending against the substitution of a human for an inspired system of religious songs. And I shall be satisfied with an express command of God, with an approved example, or with a conclusion which necessarily flows from an established principle, authorizing such substitution. But with less, no well-directed conscience can rest. Sophistry, however acute, and pretension, however arrogant, will not be satisfactory.†

* Miller’s Letters.

† It is affirmed, that in Col. iii. 16, and in the parallel scriptures, we have indubitable evidence of the divine right of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, of human composition. *The word of Christ*, that is, according to a very lame exposition, the gospel, or writings of the New Testament, exclusively, must dwell in us richly, and that with a reference to our mutual improvement; which is effected by teaching one another, in the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; which compositions not being found in the Old Testament, must be drawn from, and formed according to the doctrines of the gospel, found in the New Testament; for there *alone*, “the word of Christ,” which is to constitute the great matter of these compositions, is to be found, being

Whether a human system of psalms has a higher claim than these can give, is now the subject of inquiry.

expressly distinguished by the apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, from all former revelations.*

To these assertions I make the following replies:—You will justify me in remarking, in the first place, that it is not true, that the “word of Christ,” or the gospel, is confined, *exclusively*, to the writings of the New Testament. One who well understood what the *gospel* is, informs us, that it was preached unto Abraham;† and that to the Antediluvians the righteousness of faith, of which Noah was both an heir and a preacher, was made known. To them Christ by his Spirit preached in the day of forbearance, though now they occupy the place of imprisoned spirits.‡ If the Spirit of Christ preached to them, one would reasonably conclude, they enjoyed the revelation of *the word of Christ*. We are also certified, that the gospel was preached to the Israelites in the wilderness.—*Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.*§ How could these writers presume to assert, that “where the apostle writes immediately to the Jews themselves, he *expressly* distinguishes *the word of Christ* from all former revelations, made by Moses and the prophets,”—“distinguishes the gospel from *all* the revelations of the divine will, in the Old Testament,”—when that apostle informs those very people, and in that same epistle, that the gospel, in “the revelation of the divine will in the Old Testament,” was preached to their fathers? May not a suspicion, without illiberality, exist, that men who write and talk at this rate, are novices in the knowledge of what the gospel is? But, in every age of the church, teachers have been found, *understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.*

My second remark is this:—It is gratuitous to assert, that in the Old Testament scriptures, *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, are not to be found. Is not this a pitiful play on words?

* Discourse on Psalmody, pp. 19—23.

† Heb. xi. 7, and 1 Pet. iii. 18—20; 2 Pet. ii. 5.

‡ Gal. iii. 8.

§ Heb. iv. 2.

The following very extraordinary demands are made of the friends of Scripture Psalms in the church's worship; and it seems to be admitted, that

Does it become men of sense thus to write? (*See a following note on this subject.*)

My third remark is on the text, Col. iii. 16.—It appears to be both misunderstood and misapplied. Duties highly important, and the manner of performing them, are enjoined. They are three: An intimate and extensive acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*—Wisely promoting each other's edification: *In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another*—Praising God, with proper dispositions of heart, in the use of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs: *In psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord.* The celebration of the divine perfections, in suitable songs, wisely teaching and admonishing one another, are duties demanded by God; and that to discharge these duties aright, requires an extensive acquaintance with the inspired page, our apostle teaches, and the Christian readily acknowledges; but the scripture under consideration neither requires the members of the church to commence making *hymns*, nor authorizes the use of such, in the church, when made. Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, are, indeed, to be sung; but these are found in this inspired Book. The attempt to justify the expulsion of the Book of Psalms, and the introduction of uninspired hymns, from these injunctions of the sacred writer, argues a remarkable obliquity of intellect, not excused, even by the unhappy punctuation of our version. I have said, unhappy punctuation; for “through bad pointing this verse is not very intelligible; the several members of it should be distinguished thus: *Let the doctrine of Christ dwell richly among you; teaching and admonishing each other in all wisdom; singing, with grace in your hearts unto the Lord, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.* This arrangement the original will not only bear, but it absolutely requires it, and it is not sense without it.”* Still, it must be seen, that no pointing, however bad,

* Vide Dr. Clarke's note on the place.

if these demands were satisfied, the claims of inspired songs would be at least probable. We shall hear the demands, examine them with candour, and satisfy them if possible.

To maintain, it is said, the claim of the Scripture Psalms, it should be shown that the *word of Christ*, of which the apostle speaks, Col. iii. 16, was so peculiarly restricted to the Psalms of David, as to exclude from being any part of that word, what was spoken by himself and his apostles;—that it is usual for the apostle Paul to call the Psalms of David, *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*;—that our instructions, in these psalms and hymns, should be drawn, not from the discourses of the Saviour and his apostles, but from the Old Testament Psalms;—and that the whole worship of the Old Testament, songs of praise included, was expressly offered up to the Father, through Christ. But these things can never be proved. The very reverse of them is the truth.*

Such are the bulwarks by which the enemies of our sacred songs defend themselves. To the first of the above demands, I reply, that the restriction of the *word of Christ*, exclusively, to any part of divine revelation, is no article of our creed. As the Redeemer is the Prophet and Teacher of his

can give any countenance to a human, in preference to an inspired system of psalms. Whether the argument upon which I have animadverted, merits a better character than “gratuitous assumption,” I leave to my reader to decide.

* Discourse on Psalmody, Pref. vi. vii.

church, and the Light of the world, we consider the whole discovery of the divine will to man, to be made by him.* *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,*† said the inspired minstrel of Israel, when about to leave the sanctuary below, and join in the song of the church of the first-born above. *The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David,*‡ says an apostle of Jesus. The Holy Ghost, who spoke by David and other inspired messengers of old, was the Spirit of Christ—*The Spirit of Christ which was in them—testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*§ He who dictated the whole canon of Scripture, is the Spirit of Christ; and the sacred volume is the Saviour's word. The inspiring Spirit dwelt in the church's Head; he actuated the prophets, he inspired the apostles; in all its ages, he acted under the economy of grace; at the head of that economy, in those ages, stood the Son of God, as our Mediator; his is the revelation in our Bible. *It is the word of Christ.* Let all who deny this take their future stand, at least with the semi-Infidels of our day, and on that ground they shall be met. The songs of Scripture, whether found in the Old or New Testament, are the word of Christ. That this should be denied by any who have subscribed the following declaration, which every minister of the Presbyterian church has done, is only another, yet lamentable instance of the inconsistency of man:

* John i. 18.

† Acts i. 16.

‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

§ 1 Pet. i. 11.

“Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in his revealing to the church, in all ages, by his Spirit and word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God.”*—This supports what I have advanced, while it contradicts that on which I animadvert.

I reply to the second demand, that it is fair in us, if *psalms*, *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*, be really found in the Bible, to conclude, that the apostle intended them, rather than the imperfect effusions of well designing men, had such then existed, but of which there is not a particle of proof; the thought of the then existence of such is a gratuitous assumption. Now, let the objectors tell us the specific qualities by which these compositions are distinguished, and we shall present them with specimens of each in the book of Psalms. Or, if they please, a reference to the original denominations of these songs, might probably afford satisfactory information.† It is not pleasant to call

* Larger Cat. Q. 43.

† *Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*.—Rarely has it been found, that writers have presumed more on the ignorance and credulity of their readers, than in the confidence with which it is assumed, that when the Scripture makes mention of *hymns* and *spiritual songs*, human compositions, and not those of divine inspiration, must be intended. These teachers should have shown, that among the songs of the Bible, none corresponding to the denomination of *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*, could be found. A more summary mode has been adopted; simple assertion, which, if not so satisfactory, is undoubtedly more easy.

Although, in the exposition of these terms, among reputable

arguments, of the description now under consideration, by an appropriate name.

The reply to the third requisition in the objectors, there are some faint shades of difference, yet all unite in opposition to the idea, that a *hymn*, and *spiritual song*, must mean uninspired compositions. It may be gratifying to my reader to have the sentiments of a few characters, of literary reputation, on the subject.

Hear, in the first place, the sentiments of Calvin: “*A psalm*, (says he) is that species of composition, in the singing of which, a musical instrument besides the tongue was employed. *Hymns* are songs of praise, sung either with a voice elevated or low. *Spiritual songs* are such *psalms* as contain not only praises, but also exhortations, and other arguments.”*

Mr. Brown, of Haddington, says, “When *psalms*, *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*, are mentioned together, *psalms* may denote such as were sung on instruments; *hymns* such as contain only matter of praise; and *spiritual songs*, such as contain doctrines, history, and prophecy, for men’s instruction.”†

Dr. Lowth observes, that “the Greek translators might very properly have given the title of *HYMNS* to the book of Psalms, as that word agrees much more exactly with the Hebrew title תהלים, *TEHILLIM*, than that which they have adopted.”‡ As specimens of the *idyllium*, or *hymn*, of the Hebrew poetry, he selects Psalms 78, 104, 105, 106, 107, 136, and 139.—On the Hebrew word, שיר, *SHIR*, and the Greek word, ΩΔΗ, *ODE*, the Doctor also remarks: “Both these words have exactly the same power and signification.” Ωδῆ, *ODE*, which we render by the word *song*, is that employed by the apostle, Col. iii. 16. As specimens of the Hebrew *ode*, or *song*, he refers to Psalms 2, 3, 77, 91, 133, and others. In the תהלים, *TEHILLIM*, and שירים, *SHIRIM*, of the Hebrews, Dr. Lowth could readily find the *hymn* and *song*; though men of more noisy pretensions could discover neither the one nor the other.

Dr. Blair, when treating of the different denominations of *odes*,

* Comment. on the Epistles, p. 703.

† Dict. of the Bible.

‡ Lectures on Sacred Poetry, p. 402.

tion, requiring us to show, "that our instructions, in these songs, should be drawn exclusively from the Old Testament Psalms"—is, in part, anticipated. I only remark further, that the whole word of God is profitable; the more extensive and correct our acquaintance with it is, the better will we be furnished for every good work. Let the *word*

observe: "First, sacred odes; *hymns* addressed to God, or composed on religious subjects. Of this nature are the *Psalms of David*, which exhibit to us this species of lyric poetry in its highest degree of perfection."* Again, says he, "Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were the chief directors of the music; and from the titles of some Psalms, it would appear that they were also eminent composers of *hymns*, or sacred *poems*."† He further says—"The sacred poetry is distinguished by the highest beauties of strong, concise, bold, and figurative expression." To disrelish its imagery is indeed "the effect of false delicacy."—"The style of the poetical books of the *Old Testament* is, beyond the style of all other poetical works, fervid, bold, and animated. It is the burst of inspiration. The whole book of Psalms is to be considered as a collection of sacred odes."‡

May not the Hebrew distinction of the sacred songs, correspond with *psalms*, *hymns*, and *spiritual songs*? תהלים, TEHIL-LIM, *praises*—the title of the book of Psalms, which, as Dr. Lowth observes, might be properly translated Hymns. מִזְמוֹרִים, MISMORIM, *poems*: "A poem is called in Hebrew, מִזְמוֹר, MIZMOR, as Ps. iii. 1.—It is thus called in reference to the verse and number." שִׁירִים, SHIRIM, *songs*, as Psalms 120, 121, &c. Here are Hebrew denominations of the sacred poetry, exactly corresponding to the *hymns*, *poems*, or *psalms and songs*, of the New Testament. Why they are designated *spiritual*, is easy to know from their contents. The subject matter is spiritual; the glory and works of God, the graces and exercises of the soul. But on this subject, among men of sense, whose minds are superior to the littleness of a trick, there is no dispute.

* Lect. on Rhet. vol. 2, p. 272.

† Ibid. p. 209.

‡ Ibid. pp. 302—311.

of *Christ*, whether found in the one Testament, or in the other, dwell richly in us, and our teaching and admonitions will be better directed and of course more efficient; and the better will be qualified, too, to sing with the understanding. Were the men who employ this style of objection, better acquainted with the lessons of the inspired volume, we should not hear from them language so very unguarded.

To the fourth demand I answer, that the *whole worship* of the church of God, since the revelation of the first promise of mercy to man, has been conducted through the *mediation* of Jesus Christ. The church of God, in every age, is *one*; the covenant of grace is *one*; the Mediator is *one*; and to the church of old he was as *really* revealed as he is to the church at this day; and was, by her believing members, as really confided in for salvation, as by the saints of New Testament times. The object of worship has always been the same, and the great medium of access, the Son of God, as Redeemer, has likewise been the same.—*There is not salvation in any other*. How then can it be denied that the “Old Testament worship was conducted in the name of the Lord Jesus”—or in truth be said—“the very reverse appears to be the truth”—and then asserted—“the Old Testament church had no access to God, but through priests and sacrifices?”* With the same degree of truth may it be said that the New Testament church has no ac-

* Discourse on Psalmody, Pref. p. vii.

cess to God, but through ministers, and sacraments, &c. The ordinances of worship, under the old and new dispensations, are indeed not precisely the same; but whatever the rites of worship were, or now are, the *medium* of acceptance has been, and will ever be, the same. This was not unknown to the Israelitish saint. He was taught that *sacrifice and offering* God did *not desire*; these were at all times shown to be inadequate to the display of Jehovah's grace and glory—The pious Jew understood his Saviour's voice when he proclaimed, "Lo! I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God."*†

Whether or not the sentiments couched in, and expressed by, the language of the objection, be worthy of Christian regard, I leave to the Christian to decide; confident in the mean time that in the moment of serious reflection he will not contend

* Ps. xl. 6, 7, 8; Heb. x. 5—9.

† Hear, on this subject, the language and doctrine of all the Presbyterian churches: "Religious worship is to be given to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;—and, since the fall, not *without* a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other, but of *Christ alone*."* Those who subscribe this "form of sound words" ought to understand it; and understanding it, they ought not to contradict it. The attempt to puzzle, for a moment, an opponent, will not justify us in teaching that there has been, for sinners, a way of access to God, beside Jesus Christ; and, more especially, when it is considered that such doctrine contradicts, in no very courtly manner, both the express word of God, and the symbol to which we have pledged our vow.

* Conf. of Faith, chap. 21, § 2.

that the *word of Christ* is, exclusively, restricted to the writings of the New Testament: that *Psalms*, and *Hymns*, and *Spiritual Songs*, are not to be found in the volume of inspiration; that the apostle enjoins it on *all*, or on *any* of the members of the church, to commence making hymns for her public worship; or, that there was some other way of access to God for Old Testament saints, than by his Son as Mediator.* Arguments of the fol-

* Before I dismiss this subject, I would once more call the reader's attention to this point, on which the advocates of our *little hymn books* expend no small portion of their zeal. It is thus expressed by Mr. Freeman: "There is no Psalm of David, in which we are directed to approach God in the duty of praise and thanksgiving, for the peculiar blessings of the gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ."* What are the *peculiar* blessings of the gospel? Are they not the redemption of the soul, a new heart, pardon of sin, communion with God, and assurance of a blessed immortality? He must indeed be very slightly acquainted with the book of Psalms, who cannot find these subjects in its pages. It may be worth while to ask some of our friends, who chime so frequently and so long on the words, "offering praise *in the name of Christ*," what they precisely intend by the expression. Is it that from a sense of our unworthiness, and out of gratitude to God for all his benefits, we approach his throne through the mediation of the Saviour: and viewing that Saviour, as placed at the head of the economy of salvation, out of regard to his authority, receive and observe his institutions; thus exercising, in all our deportment, an habitual reliance upon him for acceptance before the Father, as he sustains the claims of the Godhead? Views and exercises such as these, run through and constitute the spirit of the book of Psalms. Nothing less would be consistent with the system of grace; the Holy Ghost, who operated upon

* Freeman's Discourse, p. 6, and Latta's Pref. p. vii.

lowing description cover the pages of the opposers of our Bible songs :

“ *Under every dispensation of God, new favours have demanded and obtained a new song of praise ;* as in the case of Israel at the Red Sea ; that of Deborah and Barak, of David and the prophets, under the Old Testament ; and under the New Testament, the instances of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, and Anna, are all in point. The special providences which passed over them, authorized a special song. We must follow their examples, or be destitute of appropriate matter of praise.” Thus they *declaim*, and they call it argument. But will it bear examination ? I submit the following remarks.

According to the spirit of this objection, as every new favour demands a new song, a psalm, whether of divine or human composition, can be only once appropriately used. This, however, our objecting friends do not act upon themselves ; for they use the same hymn oftener than once ; though no two circumstances be precisely the same. Con-

the hearts of the subjects of grace, and indited those spiritual songs, understood well the scheme of mercy ; and on no other scheme could he direct them to God. But will it be contended that the express words and letters, constituting the sounds, *in the name of Jesus*, or, *for Christ's sake*, are necessary to evangelical songs of praise ? How many, I demand, of those *imitations* and *hymns*, which have succeeded in banishing the inspired Psalms because of this supposed defect, have supplied it ? Count the number, and tell us how many ; then atone for the quibble by at least a secret blush of generous shame.

sistency, on the principle of the exception, would lead to the preclusion of a *psalm* or *hymn* book altogether. Every day brings its new mercies, and of course should bring its new song. Nay, every individual has his special favours, and should produce his special hymn! But disorderly as Zion now is, still more disorderly would her assemblies be, were our brethren consistent with themselves.

The objectors should prove that such expressions of devout sensibility, as those of *Zacharias*, *Mary*, &c., were intended to be introduced as models, according to which our New Testament Zion should, in future times, be supplied with sacred songs. This has been said, and with confidence too; but it has not been proved. No person doubts that gratitude is due on the reception of divine mercies, or that this devout feeling should be suitably expressed; but certainly this proves nothing for a human system, or collection of songs in our public praise. Again, observe that

Those who composed the public songs of Zion were not only inspired, but also were under the special influence of the Spirit of inspiration, in *that* service. Their compositions were, accordingly, not only embodied with the sacred Scriptures, but were also distinctly collected into a book of Psalms. When our brethren shall have substantiated their claims to similar qualifications and appointments, it will be soon enough for us to confess the legitimacy of their productions to a place

beside, or above the scripture songs. I demand a proof from the word of God, that, *with divine approbation*, a hymn of human composition was, under any dispensation of grace, admitted into the Psalmody of the church. Let the friends of innovation establish this, or tell us how they will free themselves from the charge of being advocates of will-worship. Again, it is thus objected:

“*The Scripture Psalms are abrogated: they were adapted to the ceremonial rites, and so intimately connected with, and founded on them, that they have no being beyond the ceremonial institutions themselves. The fact, that the Old Testament church had a form of Psalmody adapted to her state, proves that we should have one suitable to the condition of the New Testament dispensation.*”

This objection, as Dr. Ridgely shows us in his System of Divinity, sets aside the *reading* of the book of Psalms in our day; for if it be unfit for us to sing it, it is no less so to *read* it. There is no *essential* difference between the dispositions of mind requisite to reading and singing. The same ends are, *substantially*, to be sought by one and the other. Nay, every part of Scripture, whether of Old or New Testament, that alludes to the peculiar forms of Israelitish worship, must be expunged as unprofitable. Jesus as the *Lamb of God*, and as the *bread of life*; Christ as our *passover*, *sacrificed* for us; as our *High Priest*, having entered within

the vail; and the representation of our devotions, as living *sacrifices* offered to God, must all be blotted out; because between them and ancient rites there is a connexion; or because they allude to modes that formally are practised no more. Whatever havoc this would make in the Book of God, it would be consistent with the spirit of the objection.*

It would not be improper to inquire what was the connexion between these sacred songs and the Mosaic rites, and what is the relation between the New Testament representations of the whole system of grace, and the authorized practices of the Jewish church. The result of such inquiry would show that the worship of that church contemplated the ETERNAL DEITY as the object of devotion; a Mediator, *as making atonement* for sin, the way of approaching this object; the piety of the heart,

* In his Cases of Conscience, Mr. Baxter proposes this question: "Is it lawful to use David's Psalms in our assemblies?" He replies in the affirmative, and assigns four reasons for the assertion. He concludes by saying, "If it be lawful to sing psalms of our own, or our neighbour's making, much more of God's making, by his Spirit in his prophets." He then states the objection which has, with so little thought, been urged so often since: "They are not suitable to all our cases, nor to all the assembly." To this he replies in three remarks, of such solidity as must be felt by every candid mind; and dismisses the subject in these words: "The sectarian objections against singing David's Psalms are *so frivolous* that I will not tire the reader with any more." Mr. Baxter was no *bigot*; in some speculations he was indeed mistaken; but for truth he was a sufferer, and to its power, in the life of godliness, he was no stranger.

expressed in forms *divinely prescribed*, the only acceptable service; and that to those forms the scripture songs refer, chiefly, as the means of exhibiting these fundamental principles of real godliness. These are the great principles presented to man, in the writings of the New Testament; and, between their description in the one Testament, and delineation in the other, there exists a remarkable correspondence. They are two blazes of moral splendour combined, shedding their united beams on the extended system of grace, which could not be so fairly and impressively seen in the light of any one of them, should the other be extinguished. The plan of grace is *one*. Both Testaments embrace the same great principles of religion; the Old, as well as the New, testifies of Jesus.* It was of the writings of Moses and the prophets he spoke, when he said, *Search the Scriptures—they testify of me*. How deeply must we deplore that any disciple of the Saviour should attempt to invalidate this testimony, or extinguish this light! Can you, ye friends of the Redeemer, devise no better way to serve your Lord? what but an insupportable cause could require such reasoning as this: "The church of God, in former times, had a system of Psalmody given by *divine inspiration*, adapted to her circumstances; but it is necessary that we should have a system of songs, adapted to the present circumstances of the church; therefore—*what?*"

* John v. 39.

—every poet has a right to make *uninspired* hymns for the use of the church!” This is really the argument; but who perceives not that it is a bad one? The premises do not authorize the conclusion.

The truth is, the Old Testament Psalms are perfectly suitable to our dispensation. God and his perfections are the same—in correspondence with which there is a permanence in the character and attributes of the saint, which lays a foundation for a stated system of Psalmody; the graces and exercises of the saint are substantially the same at all times; the description and expression of these, by the *Spirit* of God, we prefer to the paintings of uninspired men. If unsuitable, what pity that neither Jesus nor his apostles, at any time, gave the most distant hint of this fact; nor did they, so far as we know, attempt to supply the defect. Again, it is affirmed that

“*We cannot sing these Psalms without contradiction and falsehood; for they describe not our case. We cannot sing in truth that we will offer burnt offerings; nor call upon one another, in our song, to employ the harp and the cymbal; while such offerings are not to be made, and such instruments not to be employed.—What have we to do with the deliverances of Israel, the victories of David, and the worship at Jerusalem?*”

Verily this objection, like the rest, makes sweeping work. Have the objectors forgotten that ALL scripture is profitable? But the whole of the above

argument is exceptionable; because, as has been shown, we *may* sing of what is not precisely our own case, otherwise all congregated singing must cease. In an assembly of a thousand persons, how many of that thousand are in circumstances, *internal* and *external*, exactly the same?—Comparatively few. What does the argument lead to in such a case? That every one must bring a psalm and a doctrine suitable, as he supposes, to his own case. Then, indeed, we would find a practice corresponding with the sentiments of our objecting brethren; but, at the same time, a practice condemned by apostolic rebuke—“How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm?” For our instruction we may sing the experience of others, though that be not precisely our own. Thus the congregation of Israel sung the deliverance of their fathers, and the experience of their inspired Psalmists, in ages after the existence of those events. In the spirit of modern objection it might have been impertinently inquired of our Lord, in the days of his sorrow, and those too with whom he united in the solemnities of worship, what they had to do with the victories of David, the deliverance from Egypt, the division of the sea, and the movements of the mountains. Messiah, however, united in those songs; in singing them he did not suspect any ground for charging him with uttering a falsehood to his God, or practising a contradiction. The sentiments of the objection are inadmissible,

Because they destroy correct views of the church of God, and tend to contract the hearts of her members. The church of Jesus is ONE ancient and extended association. She is an *immortal moral person*. Every friend of God, no matter how remote the age in which he lived, is confessed a member of this illustrious society. Every dispensation of goodness, every act of mercy to the humblest of her members, she recollects with gratitude. The victories they achieved, the blessings they obtained, the consolations bestowed upon them, and the means of their acquisition, she loves to recount, and, with pious emotion, blesses her God, in the use of those inspired songs in which they are recorded. Let the *bigot*, and the cold-blooded *voluntary of selfishness*, contract their views, and narrow their hearts to the little circles in which they move; but let no generous son of Zion act such an ungrateful part. The religion of his Bible is equally favourable to enlargement of intellect, and expansion of affection. Let him understand it well; and the sympathies of his heart will beat in unison with the joys and sorrows of the saint, whether he find him in the Arabian desert, on the sacred mountains of Israel, or under the willows by the rivers of Babylon. In the providences of former times, he will recognise a bearing on the existence, the faith, the consolations, the hopes and the practice of the church, in succeeding days; and, passing strange would it be indeed, if, in such a case, his heart

should remain unmoved, and his lips be sealed in silence. And in what language would his heart desire to express its sensibilities, but in that of the Holy Ghost?

But the objection is unfounded: for the dispensations to the church, in the days of old, were the dispensation of Messiah. He who *ascended on high*, after his humiliation, was at Mount Sinai before it.* He it was who is characterized as *the Angel of Jehovah's presence that saved, redeemed, bare, and carried them all the days of old.*† From the fall of man, the Son of God, as *Mediator*, has been the actual administrator of divine providence. His hand is visible in all that concerned, or does concern, his church. Though we do not bring, literally, a burnt-offering from the fold, or from the stall, yet we may, and surely ought to bring before God, a fervent zeal, and an ardent love; and in the exercise of an unfeigned faith, every believer really brings before his God the blood of that ineffably valuable victim, to which the devout worshipper was referred, by the sacrificial rites of Moses; and without reliance on which, he did not hope for acceptance. Since faith was first found on earth, these evangelical sentiments were well understood; hence God inquired, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" He taught his people that he would not "be pleased with thousands of rams, nor with ten thousand rivers

* Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18; Eph. iv. 8.

† Isa. lxiii. 9.

of oil." Thus instructed, the penitent prophet could, while pouring forth the tears of grief, sing, "Thou delightest not in burnt-offering," as any atonement for sin. Could the Israelite, without falsehood and contradiction, sing these, and similar lines to God? With as easy an exposition, and as true an accommodation, can we sing that *we will come into his house, and bring an offering with us.**

* The truth is, no well-informed Christian ever felt his devotion embarrassed by such a phraseology. When intending to cavil or to cover a retreat, to offer such objections may serve a temporary purpose; but withal it is still below a man of sense, and much more unworthy a man of piety. Equally trivial is the exception, respecting the mention of the musical instruments of the temple worship. Though we do not employ the cymbal or the harp, in chanting our solemn song, the naming of them is neither impertinent nor vain. The ancient use of such instruments instructs us that, in celebrating the praises of God, we should call forth the voice of melody, as expressive of affections well attuned to the delightful exercise. And may not the Christian as consistently sing these portions of holy song, as the Jew did in his synagogue, where an instrument of music was not employed; or as the Israelite in his dwelling, who never owned an organ, and whose hand never touched the strings of a harp? And, at any rate, this objection comes with no very great degree of consistency, from our *Presbyterian* friends, who direct the music of their beloved hymns with the *bass violin* and *German flute*, or the *organ*. Nay, though they possess no harp, and recognise no altar, yet their *imitation* of the 43d Psalm teaches the worshipper to sing,

Before thine *altar*, Lord,
My *harp* and song shall sound
The glories of thy word.

Comparatively few of the Psalms of inspiration speak in the typical language of the Old Testament institutions; and that lan-

The cause, indeed, must be very bad, where determined advocates cannot find something to say. That what has no great plausibility, will often succeed in persuading a previously inclined mind, has been long remarked; and the remark will probably find an illustration in the remaining arguments, which I shall briefly review.

The typical rite of the Levitical economy was, by divine appointment, connected with the anti-type. The same vital truth, or religious principle, belongs to both; in the one in embryo, in the other developed. The type embodied the principle, and the record of the type, or a reference to it, directs the Christian mind to the religious principle which is common to the type and the anti-type. The light of the anti-type shining on the type causes it to be better understood than it could be without it. The type, too, has its light. The subject on which the lights of both the Old and New Testaments concentrate, must of necessity be more clearly seen than it would be in that of either in a state of separation. No science could advance or

guage, in those few, by no means renders them obscure to the Christian, who is duly conversant with his Bible. The truth is, "the writers of the New Testament wrote in the idiom of the synagogue."* The phraseology is that of the Israelitish nation, clothed in Greek words. "The figure in the Psalms is that which is peculiar to the Hebrew language, in which the figure gives its meaning with as much perspicuity as the plainest speech."†

*-Campbell.

† H rsley.

maintain its acquisitions did it not carry along its elementary principles. Thus it is in the life of the Christian and of the church, in their spiritual progress and acquisitions. The typical *element* and its anti-typical development cannot be separated. The vital religious principle that pervades, and is common to both, is that of which the soul takes hold, and with which it has to do. The book of Psalms is not typical, though it names and refers to the rites of a typical economy, as it does to the anti-types of the new dispensation. It is the sacred principle common to both that constitutes the life of its inspired songs.* To fix the mind and heart upon this religious principle is the aim of those who use this book in their Psalmody. Here the Old Testament saint and the New Testament worshipper meet upon a common ground, and in sweet communion. This view of the subject, with a levity, which it is hoped time—rather the grace of God—has corrected—the writer of “*Strictures on the Apology*,” pronounced absurd, and more than intimated, that on that principle, that is, looking beyond the mere literal expression—the odes of a heathen poet, in praise of a heathen god, might as easily be turned into spiritual songs or be spiritually understood, as the typical references found in some of Zion’s inspired songs. That for Apollo, we could understand Christ; and by wine, mean religious joy! His own language is—

* See, on this subject, Fairbairn’s *Typology*.

“Dr. Watts thought that the moral odes of Horace might be *altered*, so as to make good spiritual songs; but Mr. — might very well sing them as they are: he could easily understand Apollo to mean Christ, and wine to be spiritual joy,” p. 37. This admits of no remark, unless we should say that it is a part of the instrumentality by which so many are persuaded that, in the Psalmody of the church, a miserable *imitation* of a portion of the book of Psalms, is preferable to a full and faithful version of the book itself.

It is asked, “*Since we, in prayer, employ our own compositions, why not do the same in our songs of praise?*” I reply: Because the cases are not similar. Prayer and praise are distinct ordinances. There is not the same necessity for a liturgy of prayer, that there is for a system of sacred songs: we can have social prayer without a prescribed form, but not social singing of praise. Again, God has not seen meet to appoint, at any time, for the stated use of his church, a book of prayers; but he has given an inspired book of *Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*. And, lastly, observe, that the Lord has promised his Spirit, as the Spirit of supplications, to help the infirmities of his sanctified ones, who neither know how to pray, nor for what to pray, as they ought; but on the page of inspiration there is no promise of aid from his Spirit, in the composition of a book of hymns, for the public service of his church. This seems to

intimate, that to such a work he proposed not to call any of her sons.

Psalmody is an institution, like every other divine ordinance, agreeing with others in many points, but specifically distinguished from all others by something peculiar to itself. What then is specifically distinctive in Psalmody? Certainly not the object addressed, nor the religious state of the worshipper; neither is it the general spirit of religious worship. Among others we notice the following things: The *musical* ordering of the voice, to give melodious expression to the highly elevated affections of a sanctified heart, led on by a spiritual understanding illuminated by the truth of God, belongs to Psalmody. In prayer the form is a simple articulation, or, if individual, a mental address is all that is required; while the understanding, the affections, and circumstances of the supplicant, suggest the thought and the language to be employed. The intention of prayer is to bring *our own* and the *case of others*, as far as known, before the Almighty in direct expression of confession or supplication. In this the condition of our own hearts, under existing circumstances at the time, is to be laid open without reserve before the throne of mercy. God has not provided for us a *liturgy* of prayer, for it is not *necessary*; but he has given a general pattern, and in the doctrines, the promises, the commands, the institutes of the Bible, and in the relative circumstances around us,

he has furnished material for supplication; and withal he sends his Spirit, as the Spirit of grace, to direct in the whole duty, supplying that blessed influence which leads the soul to appropriate matter, and fit expressions, and which gives the intensity of heart requisite in this part of religious devotion. In all this our own hearts have occasion for the expression of all that is in and pertains to them. In Psalmody, too, the heart is engaged, but under another aspect. Its design is more general, and, as to matter, more exterior to the soul, and it contemplates, directly, what is of more import than the esoterics of the heart—the manifestations of Jehovah's character, whether made in creation at large, in general providence, in his word, or in his more special acts of justice, truth, mercy, or love. In the subject of Psalmody may be found the matter of prayer; but *specifically*, as Psalmody, it is not prayer. In the former it is praise, melodiously expressed. We do not sing our prayers. The matter of our song becomes the matter or the occasion of our praise. In this God has not given to every one of us, as in the case of prayer, the promised aid of his Spirit, *to make* a new hymn, or hymn book; but he has furnished for our use the *liturgy* of sacred song dictated by his own Spirit. This was indispensably requisite. The nature of the church's stated Psalmody is permanent,—prayer is more transient. In prayer the language used is prompted by the inward workings of the soul, un-

der the influence of the grace of the Spirit; but in Psalmody, the language and the thought of the song, which are *exterior* things to the soul, is intended to *awaken* the devotional sentiment of the heart, and to *lead* the mind in the solemn exercise; and for this purpose the church's blessed Head has given us the Book of sacred songs, inspired by the Holy Ghost; and with an energy unknown in the productions of uninspired men, infallibly unfolds the glories of the Godhead, as drawn in the divine plans, and indicated in the execution of those plans, in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. In Zion's inspired hymns—her spiritual songs—there is no grace, no holy disposition of the saint, passed over in silence, no sorrow of a godly sort but is delineated, no fibre of celestial joy that is not finely touched; nor is there a revealed attribute of the Divinity that remains unsung in those *odes* of heavenly origin. Precisely what a liturgy of Psalmody ought to be. Permanent, because God whom it contemplates and addresses, is immutable; but prayer while addressed to the unchangeable God, is immediately conversant about the mutable condition and heart of man. Prayer and Psalmody are not the same. Provision for them is accordingly made.

The supposed obscurity of the Book of Psalms is alleged as a reason for the preference of the modern hymn book. In this argument there is undoubtedly some truth; yet it proves but little. The *hymn*

book of the modern poet, however swelled it may be, has infinitely less meaning than the book of Psalms; it requires less intellect and industry to enter into its spirit; less acquaintance with the truths, providence, and grace of God, to understand it; and much less perfection to come up to its demands, than do the songs of inspiration. But this argument goes much too far. Whatever force it has in setting aside the book of Psalms, from its specific use, will operate no less powerfully against the whole Bible. One of our modern evangelizers might, perhaps, be found capable of furnishing the world with a *system* of divinity, theoretical and practical, much more easily understood than the writings of the Old and New Testaments; and, probably, by employing an ambiguous phraseology, and "a charitable latitude" of meaning, there might be little, if any thing, found in it contrary to the word of truth. What would be thought of substituting such a system in place of the Bible? This would, as in the case of the book of Psalms, supersede all the labours of exposition. Mr. Freeman* disapproves of lecturing upon an inspired Psalm, in order to sing it with understanding. He prefers those "psalms which carry the explication in themselves." "This explication is given," he says, "in the version (Imitation?) of Dr. Watts." If, then, an *imitation* of the Bible, of more easy comprehension than the Bible itself, can be found,

* Discourse, p. 23.

why not adopt it in place of that mysterious and inspired book? If the above reason has any weight, it would lead the man who consistently pursues it, to the result now stated.*

We know, indeed, that our brethren who use and vindicate the use of the *Imitation* of the Psalms, and other hymns, would shrink from such a conclusion. Why, then, do they embrace premises from which that conclusion would necessarily flow? I am indeed afraid, that the fact on which this objection is founded, *ignorance of the Bible*, has a very extensive influence in the banishment of *inspired odes* from the Psalmody of the church. And, like most expedients, we may be pretty certain, that instead of remedying, the preference of an *imi-*

* It is not well to say, that to sing a paraphrase is preferable to singing an inspired song, after making upon it an expository lecture. The lecturer or paraphrast, whether he communicates his exposition from the pulpit or the press, *may err, may mistake* the spirit of the text, may only communicate *a part* of its meaning; and at best can only profess to *aid* in understanding it. Is it not then better still to retain the text? It is uncorrupt, still retains its *spirit* and *plenitude of meaning*, and from it the saint will derive what no exposition can give. What is now said might be exemplified from every page of Watts' *Imitation*. In former editions several examples were given of incorrectness and lameness in the *Imitation*. These are omitted at present, not because the criticisms are deemed unsound, but because they are not considered as essential to our argument. None will say that the *Imitation* is the book of Psalms—that it is scripture; and most who are competent to judge, were it not in the place where it is, would say, it is a poor thing; or in the strong language of a strong man, before quoted—it is a “miserable attempt.”

tation, will increase the evil. Books, whose scope is to conduct their reader to the lively oracles of truth, may be useful; but those intended to supersede the appointed use of any portion of the word of God, must be of dangerous tendency.*

* The writer of a very temperate and well written article in the Presbyterian Magazine for July, 1822, among several remarks, the propriety of which some might doubt, says much that is valuable. He regrets "the disrelish" into which the book of Psalms has fallen with many. In accounting for this, while he admits that with some and to some degree the want of a faithful version in a more tasteful style may have its effect, yet "it is not the chief reason." He sets this unhappy disrelish down to the account of ignorance and defect in Christian experience. Hearken to what he says: "The very *excellence* of the book of Psalms has—in this—its effect. Their depth of matter, their spirituality, their sublimity, their transcendent elevation of devotion, raise them above the comprehension, and above the standard of devotional feeling of ordinary Christians. It is a fact that Christians of deficient attainments often find themselves more edified in reading other books than the Bible, and really relish them more. But the higher Christians rise in gracious experience, the higher is their esteem for the pure word of God, until at length, every human production becomes insipid in comparison therewith. As it certainly can have no good effect to promote in the public mind, a preference of other books, to the Bible, so it is conceived there can no good effects arise from promoting in the public taste a preference of other compositions to the Psalms the Holy Spirit hath inspired."

The picture drawn by the excellent writer is far from flattering. There is reason to fear, however, that it is too true to the life. Whether in accommodation to the *ignorance* and *defect of grace* in the church, it be advisable stately to give her and her children some more diluted thing than the living, and the life-giving, inspired truth of God, in place of it, we leave to our readers to decide.

We have just turned from an argument, pleading the ignorance of New Testament worshippers, as a reason for setting aside the book of Psalms as the matter of the church's song; we now meet another of an opposite cast. "Christian attainments, it seems, are of an order too high to be suited with the sober compositions of inspired men." How vain is man! How easily the soothing accents of flattery induce to self-deception! Tell us, ye trumpeters of your own graces, what are those attainments, and those exercises of grace, which the Spirit of your Redeemer has not described with infallible accuracy in the book of God?—yea, even in the book of Psalms? Till you find some not there described, we beg you to excuse a few of your fellow pilgrims in the journey of life, if they suspect your boasted acquisitions to be the illusions of the twilight of a partially instructed mind. We cannot highly admire that *humility*, which induced the author of the Imitation of the Psalms to set himself before all the prophets of the Israelitish church,* as to qualifications, for furnishing us with

* "Nor is the attempt (*of making a new psalm book*) vain-glorious, or presuming; for, in respect of clear evangelic knowledge, *the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than all the Jewish prophets.*"—Watts' Pref. p. 6.

There is a sense in which the New Testament ministry is superior to that of the Old Testament;—that which to the one was matter of *promise*, is to the other matter of history, or of existing fact. Both the promise and the historical fact, contemplate the same objects. But was Dr. W. *as well* qualified to make a book of Psalms, as were David and other prophets? The Doctor

a system of evangelical psalms. To remedy such exhibitions of self-complacency, a more intimate acquaintance with the spirit which breathes in the scripture songs, may with confidence be recommended.

As an argument for human compositions in our Psalmody, we find it further urged, that "*Old Testament songs are defective, and that the New Testament forms are few.*" If the poetic compositions of the New Testament be very limited, instead of taking the fact as an argument to justify the practice contended for, I would rather understand it as an admonition to us, to confine ourselves to those portions of the book of God, that, from their structure, evidently appear intended for the purpose of Psalmody. If he who has the residue of the Spirit, enlarged not the number of our sacred hymns, when finishing the canon of revelation, and settling, finally, the constitution of his church, we should proceed to the task with cautious steps. We should have his command. Let us, then, turn to the holy volume; and, before we fill his sanctuary with our own effusions, let the stores of inspiration be exhausted.

has intimated that he was *better* qualified, and his friends agree with him; for they take *his*, and *reject* and *vilify* that of the others. We must nevertheless demur; because we *know*, that to supply a system of Psalms, David—and others—were inspired. We *do not believe this* of Dr. W. It requires the *madness* of this *enthusiasm* to go only a little farther, and we shall have the whole Old Testament rejected, in order to substitute the *superior* illusions of some modern *illuminati*.

But, again, it is contended, that “*The imitation, and the hymns of modern date, are better calculated to arouse, to warm, and elevate the affections, than are the productions of inspiration.*” So I know it has been said, and no doubt thought; but it is only hypothesis, or something worse; and by what evidence is the hypothesis supported? Affections may be awakened, and the passions thrown into tumult, where no piety exists. *About* religion there may be much elevation of heart, and yet no genuine devotion. Inattention to this fact has proved as auspicious to the progress of a raging enthusiasm, as it has been unpropitious to the cause of the religion of the Bible. That the lighter principles of our constitution may be more readily excited, and animal feeling more easily cast into commotion, by the *flippant* verbiage of man, than by the more *deep* and *solemn* delineations of the Holy Ghost, is not hard of belief. So Augustine informs us, that “the Donatists inflamed their minds with human compositions, and reproached the orthodox for singing, with sobriety, the divine songs of the prophets.”—The character of that warmth which is produced by the words of man, rather than from the appointed use of those of God, is a just object of suspicion, and its consequences of dread. “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This

shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.”*

If an elevated devotion consist in an exercise of heart corresponding to the glories of the divine character, as these are displayed in the face of Jesus, and to our relation to him, as saved sinners, it may very reasonably be questioned, whether the productions of human ingenuity be better adapted to it than the words of God. Conjecture is no more admissible in true religion, than in genuine science; and, when admitted, is no less pernicious in the former, than it is injurious to the latter.

Much has been ascribed to the influence of pious hymns, of human composition, in the religious movements of our days. But before any valid conclusion can be drawn from this, in their favour, two points must previously be settled: The first is, the character of these movements. Should what is most prominent in these excitements be of doubtful character, or, perhaps, condemnable at the bar of inspired truth, little commendation would be due to that influence by which they are effected. The next point to be ascertained, is, supposing the character of these movements sustained, as really gracious, was this character derived from the use of those hymns? Or did it proceed from the use of other means, divinely appointed, to effect a work of grace? Until the friends of modern hymn

* Isaiah l. 11.

books shall have satisfactorily settled these inquiries, which are certainly fair ones, others will hold themselves excused in not giving that credit to the hypothesis—for it is no more than hypothesis—which its advocates claim.

It is most notorious, that those excitements called *revivals* of religion, which make the greatest noise, are effected where the *most pernicious* errors are habitually taught. That these, and *modern* hymns, have a great share in the production of those *noisy* but *short-lived* agitations, need not be doubted. Israel's worship of the golden calf was marked by a greater excitement than the usual and approved worship of Jehovah. A visit to those favoured districts of *revival*, a few months after a *magazine* description, or ecclesiastical report has been given of the multitudes converted, would cast a shade of doubt, generally, on those fine narratives. And the man who considers that the embracing of truth, turning to God *through a crucified, and exalted Saviour*, and living a life of *practical* godliness, are the best proofs of real conversion, wishes, sincerely, that things were published as they really are, and that our country furnished *one* journal, which would *venture* to tell *all* the truth.

The idea that the songs of inspiration are inadequate to the elevation of modern devotion, demands another remark. When we look to the Christian heroes of the Reformation; when we review the intellectual pre-eminence of those cham-

pions for truth, who flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries;—when we consider the ardour of their piety, and the fervour of their enlightened zeal; the firmness of their character, and the magnitude of their achievements; and compare with these the *frivolity*, the indifference to truth, the thoughtless rage for innovation, that characterized the ecclesiastics of the eighteenth century,—the comparison is as humbling to the character of the latter, as it is honourable to the former. Yet among those highly favoured men of God, whose devotion was of the loftiest kind, and whose deeds of valour, in the cause of God and man, are immortal;—whose experience in the life of godliness was deep and substantial, while their dangers were great and their sufferings extreme;—among the thousands of those martyrs, divinely ennobled as they were, not *one* was found to imagine, that the inspired Psalms were of a character too *flat* for his piety, *unsuitable* to a gospel day, or *unfit* for the various conditions of the Christian life. Such imaginations were unknown in those days, when God was seen among men, dispensing, in measures unusually large, the gifts of his Spirit. Complaints of the obscurity of the inspired page were left to exercise the blinded votaries of the Romish church; and, to *regret* their *flatness*, was a suitable employment for the raving devotees of John of Leyden. Robert Barclay, Isaac Watts, John Wesley, and their devotees, engaged in the same unholy work. Can the blessing of Heaven rest on such a course?

Hear the opinion of the evangelical *Romaine*. "Experience," says he, "demonstrates, that God *does* bless the singing of *Psalms* in the church, and does *not* bless the singing of men's hymns.—You may bring *your poems* into the church, and may be vastly delighted with performing them: so is the vainest creature at the opera. The pleasure, in *both cases*, arises from the *same cause*.—But there *can* be no more spiritual edification in the one than in the other; because neither of them is the *ordinance* of God."*

It is again contended, that "*The poetic compositions in general use, particularly those of Dr. Watts, are more elegant in diction, and in sentiment more evangelical, than is any literal version of the Bible Psalms; and therefore demand a preference.*" Into the literary merits of these compositions, it is at present beside my design to inquire. Should all that is claimed for the *orthodoxy* of their sentiments, the correctness of their figures, and the *elegance* of their diction, be admitted, still they are but the productions of human ingenuity. They are *not even imperfect versions*; the best of them rise no higher than *partial imitations*. Whatever *pretiness* may belong to them, I must prefer the words of inspiration, even in a *version* of the humblest pretensions.

But this supposed excellence belongs not to the compositions of Dr. Watts. The fact, that so much

* Works, vol. 8.

labour has been employed upon the *Imitation* of the Psalms, proves the force of the conviction, that it was imperfect. This imperfection extended to the sentiment as well as to the phraseology.*

The idea of these compositions being of a character more evangelical than a *literal version* of an inspired Psalm, shall now claim no further notice. To hear the assertion from the reputed friends of the Bible, is an omen of no good.

With full as much confidence as candour, it is asserted that *Dr. Watts had as good a right to make, or translate psalms, as Mr. Rouse*. The equality of the right is not denied; but the assertion is calculated to deceive the unthinking. It assumes the fact, that the production of Watts is a *version*, which is *not* true. It was designed as a *substitute* for every fair translation; and one of its

* We know, indeed, that to intimate this is unsafe, even in men of eminence. The character of the late Dr. Dwight, as a man of literature and taste, is deservedly high in our country; yet such was the strength of the torrent of public opinion amongst us, in favour of the *Imitation, errors and all*, that even the President of *Yale College* dared to correct only a *part* of these. Dr. Watts, he says, “*was not distinguished as a correct writer.*” Thus, still the imperfections of the work are proclaimed.—These are not denied by such of its friends as are capable of judging in the case. Criticism is therefore precluded. Were these imperfections confined to style or composition, the matter would be of comparatively small importance; but they extend to the expression of erroneous sentiments, unwarrantable omissions, and change of subject; to derangement of inspired order, rejection of scriptural metaphors, as well as to violations of the canons of composition.

excellencies is said to be its *remoteness* from the original. That called Rouse's *paraphrase*, is intended as, and really is, a fair version; though not so perfect as to preclude improvement. Let it, however, be kept in mind, that a greater departure from the *thought* and *language* of the Holy Ghost, would constitute no part of this improvement. It must be again repeated, that the contest is not between *version* and *version*; but between *translation* and *imitation*; between *inspired songs* and those of human *composition*. The assertion of the disputer is this: Dr. Watts had as good a right to imitate the book of Psalms, as Mr. Rouse had to translate it; and we have the same right to employ, in the worship of God, the imitation, that others have to use the translation. The argument is of the same species as this: The British divines, in the reign of James I. made a version of the Bible; therefore, Ethan Allen had as good a right to make HIS Bible; and those who choose it, have as good a right to employ it, as others have to use the translation, for the rule of their faith and manners! The value of the argument, thus applied, every Christian can appreciate.

Upon the declaration, so frequently made, that Dr. Watts had as good a right to furnish us with a book of Psalms, as had the inspired prophet David, I make no additional remarks. The causes which have led to such an assertion must be deplored, and the consequences must be feared. The exist-

ence of such a sentiment among professors at this day, is sufficient to justify the present attempt to turn your attention to the subject. Let the members of every church be told, let them be made to understand, that no production of the human mind, however high its rank, can compare with any page of the inspired volume.

There is one objection which, were it not so frequently adduced, for the sake of the objectors I would willingly conceal—It is substantially expressed by Dr. W.: “*Some Psalms are so full of cursings, that they hardly become the tongue of a follower of the blessed Jesus!!*”

The objectors certainly forget, that these Psalms were given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Those usually specified as objectionable, are expressly quoted by the apostle Peter, as the words of the divine Spirit.* May not then a follower of the blessed Saviour use those words which the Holy Spirit of that Saviour has dictated for his instruction?—Might it not be well for the objectors to pause, and consider whether such language as they employ, approaches not *towards* a blaspheming of that Spirit, who, through the instrumentality of his Word, sanctifies the soul? But this objection proceeds from a false view of the Divine character. God is *just* as well as *merciful*; and he instructs

* Acts i. 16, 20; Ps. lxi. 25; and cix. 8.

his church to "sing both of mercy and judgment."*†

Psal. ii. 9. "This view of the Messiah as a destroyer is in perfect keeping with the New Testament doctrine, that those who reject Christ will incur an aggravated doom, and that Christ himself is in some sense the destroyer of those who will not let him be their Saviour, Luke xix. 27."—Psal. xxxv. 5. "The Psalmist desires the destruction of those sinners precisely as God wills it; nor is it any harder to reconcile such wishes with the highest degree of human goodness than it is to reconcile the certain fact that God allows some men to perish with his infinite benevolence." Psal. xix. 22. "The general doctrine of providential retribution, far from being confined to the Old Testament, is distinctly taught in every one of our Saviour's parables, Matt. xxi. 41; xxii. 7; xxiv. 51."‡

Listen to another distinguished minister who, in the discharge of his public trust, administered a scathing rebuke to the irreverent and demoralizing declarations of those who reproached the book of Psalms, as *unevangelical* in character. This is his

* Ps. ci. 1.

† God has *threatened* his and his people's implacable enemies with ruin. This overthrow is a *promise* to his church; and every time she prays, *Thy will be done*, she *really* employs the language which is said to be unfit for a follower of the blessed Jesus. God's Spirit never dictated, or approved of *private personal* vengeance; but he teaches to pray for the accomplishment of every promise, and to *approve* of the decisions of unwavering justice.

‡ J. A. Alexander, D. D., on the Psalms.

language: "He is not a Christian who does not possess the same spirit these Psalms express. So far is it from being opposed to the spirit of the gospel, that we are willing to give those Psalms their *broadest meaning*, despising the *shrinking* interpretation of those who would make them mere predictions. If they are fit for God to utter and execute, they are fit for man to use in prayer, and in view of their execution, or when executed, to sing in praise:"—one who, though dead, thus continues to speak, and who, while living, never spoke to an inattentive audience. And another minister of justly high reputation in the Presbyterian church, being asked—"May all the songs in the book of Psalms be sung in the worship of God?" replied in the affirmative; and, in his own impressive manner, added—"The fastidiousness of ignorance alone can doubt it."

These mistaken views of Dr. Watts, as to the character of the book of Psalms, greatly contributed to the relaxation of a sense of the claims of righteousness on the public mind. The authority of law and demands of right, were made to yield to a spurious cry of an ill-defined benevolence. Private revenge, which is wrong, became confounded with public justice, which is right.

Another objection: "*The name of Christ*, it is alleged, *is not found in the book of Psalms. The name of the blessed Jesus ought to be in our psalm book.*" That the blessed Redeemer should have in our

Psalmody a prominent place is admitted by all. And has he not a commanding place in the book of Psalms? Is it true that the NAME of Christ, literally, is not there? Is not *Messiah* found in the original, and in our version—The *Anointed*? Do we not find in various forms of expression—“The *Saviour God*?” “*God of salvation*?” etc. Turn them into Greek, and we shall then literally have *Christ*, and *Jesus God*. We bow at the NAME of Jesus, but we know no evangelical charm in mere Greek sounds, whatever they may have of literary fascination to the educated ear. We are unwilling to identify the spirit of the objector and of his objection, with that of the superstition which always bows at the *name of Jesus*, while knowing little of, and caring as little for, the glorious Person and character of the Anointed Saviour. But to meet the objection: It is not true that these names of the divine Redeemer are not in the book of Psalms. Will the objector venture to say, that Christ is not in the Psalms of inspiration?—that they are *Christless* Psalms! If not, then is not the objection a trifling play on words, not becoming the good man, when treating a serious subject? Or is it so that the church—at least the whole Presbyterian church,—till a very late day, had nothing but a *Christless* Psalmody?—That those hundreds, or thousands of churches in Europe and America, who use the scripture songs, have nothing but a *Christless* Psalmody? This will not in so many words be

said; and yet if the objection has any meaning, such is its import. But Christ Jesus is in those sacred compositions—his NAME, his *character*—is there delineated. There the pious worshipper finds him, confides in him, and celebrates his praise. May it not be hoped that the excellent translation and notes of Professor Alexander will soon silence in the church, and in the country, the ill-advised language and unhappy thought of the objector?*

* In the Princeton "Repertory," for October, 1850, we find the following statement: "There are thousands of Presbyterian worshippers who to this very day content themselves with the rough, bald, and scarcely metrical prose of Rouse; and some, though their number is happily decreasing, who think it a sin against God to use any praises in his worship which contain the name of Jesus." This language of small ware men, we did not expect to find in this Journal. The tens of thousands of Presbyterians referred to, can form of it a proper estimate. Upon it we make no remark, but leave the *truth*, the *spirit*, and *character* of this *hit* or *fling*, or whatever it is, to the reflections of the writer, to yield him such amount of reputation and enjoyment as he may draw from it. The article in which it is found gives us an interesting compend of the history of the religious poetry of the Germans. The writer seems to regret that England and Scotland, instead of going in the German track of a multiplied hymnology, for 200 years satisfied themselves with plain and faithful versions of the book of Psalms, in their Psalmody. He speaks with approbation of the breaking in upon this uniformity by Watts, Wesley, and others, bringing us more near to the neighbourhood of the German practice. What has been the effect of this practice upon sound doctrine and religious character? Where are heresies found? Has orthodoxy its home with the great body of the German, the Watts, and the Wesley schools? Or does it continue peacefully to dwell in the abodes of the contemned Bible Psalmody? This history teaches a useful lesson;

But to notice every cavil would be endless, as it would be useless. Collateral subjects of disputation I purposely avoid, that the main one may, as much as possible, be brought unembarrassed and fairly before my reader. How far I have succeeded in a lucid statement of my subject, shall be left to others to decide. I can only say, that I intended well. But whatever may be thought of me or my work, I am not without confidence, that a scriptural Psalmody shall ultimately prevail. Public opinion is fluctuating; and mere party spirit will, in time, yield to the dictates of divine authority. The period is coming when men will believe, with an elegant writer of the last age, that "when mortals converse with their Creator, they cannot do it in so proper a style as in that of the Holy Scriptures."* The ascendancy of the Bible, at this day, gives ground of assurance, that we have not to look through the *vista* of ages, to see its triumph completed. Its triumph is at hand. Yet I am not insensible of the points from which opposition to a reform may be expected. Where men of high standing have pledged themselves, the usual share of intelligence and integrity that falls to the citizens of Zion, is not always sufficient to induce a retraction of incorrect sentiment, and a retracing of their devious steps. The habit, too, formed by and, in a moment of better temper, this writer is capable of deducing from it the legitimate inference.

* Spectator, Vol. 6, No. 405.

the prevailing practice of several generations is not easily changed. Ill-defined views and floating ideas upon the general subject, and an unsettled judgment as to the preferable form of a better course, have their influence in retarding a desirable change.

Still I am not without hope, that among those who now employ an imitation of sacred songs, instead of the inspired odes themselves, many, rising above the little spirit of faction, and asserting an independency of party names, will lift the voice in a testimony against the reproach attempted to be cast on the book of Psalms. Such will bear in mind, that the contest is not for Old Testament in preference to New Testament doctrine and language. They will recognise the impression of the Holy Ghost upon the language and doctrine of both the Testaments; and they will prefer that which God hath given, to any thing that man would substitute in its place. A moment's thought will show them, that the book of Psalms is "the Bible in miniature;" precisely what an evangelical Psalm book should be, that is, a compressed exhibition of Jehovah's character, grace, and providence; of man's state, experience and prospects. They will not be amused by the idle talk of some scripture songs being incapable of personal application to the precise case of the individual; for they are taught by that Spirit, who is their Sanctifier and Comforter, that "all Scripture is profitable for in-

struction." This instruction in righteousness they can derive from inspired delineations of the perfections, works, and grace of God; and from similar descriptions of the experience of the elder children of their heavenly Father, who have travelled before them the paths of sorrow, of holy joy, and of life. To them, after all the specious declamation, which has no bearing on it, shall have been heard, the question will still recur: Whether are more excellent, those sacred "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," recommended by their inspiration, and by the experience of the children of grace, in every age; or those necessarily defective effusions, which can claim no higher origin than the ingenuity of man? This is, indeed, the question. May I not hope that it will receive a candid consideration?

This hope is encouraged by the very general persuasion of intelligent and serious Christians, who think of it, that the Psalmody of the church is, practically, in a very wretched state; and by the extent of the dissatisfaction with its material, as evinced in the repeated attempts to make it better, and the ill success of those attempts. When it is considered that the most orthodox and able portion of those who use the *Imitation*, instead of inspired songs, in Psalmody, have given it but a *quasi* sanction, their relation to that innovation will not appear to be well established. We have already seen that, in the Presbyterian church, it crept into use by a

species of stealth—by a mere *tolerance*, without any thing deserving the name of ecclesiastical inquiry or authoritative judicative decision—and this introduction did not originate from a radical Presbyterian root. Present popularity does not give security for its permanence. “The Plan of Union” had its day of popularity in the Presbyterian church, equal to that of the Imitation of the Psalms; but when found to be unpresbyterian it was repudiated. So will the other be repudiated, as soon as that department of the church shall be brought to see the subject in its nature, bearing, and results.

Before closing these remarks we embrace the opportunity of offering a brief word in reply to the inquiry:—How shall the evil complained of be remedied? The inquiry is reasonable; and to it our response is:—

1. In a faithful version, and with as much elegance as is possible, consistent with fidelity, in *prose* to be chanted; or in *metrical language*—tasteful poetry—to be otherwise sung, restore, in its entirety, to the Psalmody of the church, the book of Psalms.

2. If the church authorize it, collect from the books of inspiration at large, a volume or volumes, of inspired poetic matter, in prose or verse, leaving her ministers and people to use, or not to use, at pleasure, such collection or collections.

3. When the sources of inspired poetry are exhausted, if any enlightened and sanctified minds

wish for more, *which is not probable*, let the church, duly impressed with the solemnity of the inquiry, and with the hazard of the undertaking to meet that wish, in council endeavour to ascertain what it may, in the case, be *necessary, safe, or advisable* to do; and thus, by a common consent, settle the *what* and the *how* of the subject of inquiry.

The version of the Scripture Psalmody, like that of the entire Bible at large, ought not to be a party or a mere sectional affair. It is a matter of general interest, and as such should be viewed and treated.*

Desirable and important as an enlightened harmony on this subject may be deemed to be, and however confident we are of its ultimate attainment, the hope of its very immediate acquisition is not authorized by the character of this age. The activity of our time is, indeed, imposing, and in it there is much to praise; but the most conspicuous

* The committee on Psalmody, appointed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of 1820, had in view *a version* of the book of Psalms, by selection or direct translation. The venerable and excellent member who was the second chairman of that committee, at the time of his decease, had, in a first draft, made an original version of about one-third of the book of Psalms. The purpose was to versify the whole, print, and lay it in overture before the Presbyteries—send copies to the other departments of the Reformed church, for their revision, remarks, and improvements; and, if possible, to have a Psalm book with the sanction of at least the whole Presbyterian family. Such was the aim of leading men in the Presbyterian church, thirty years ago.

portion of it requires little of that self-denial which distinguishes true religion; and, alas! that charity whose pretensions are highest, rejoices but little in the truth. The semblance of love, the treacherous salutation, may betray the truth; and, without suspecting it, an ill-directed zeal, *about something* pertaining to religion, may, in its associations, recommend the most fatal error. And where is the man whose guards are so skilfully placed as to be out of danger from the enemy at *every* point? This consideration instructs us, not in a foolish self-gratulation, but in an humble vigilance.

While, therefore, we should guard against the impostures of that empty charity, whose gifts are so few; and not be deceived by that love of noisy pretensions, which never gives of its own; we should, with equal care, keep a watchful eye on that orthodoxy, and that zeal, which are separated from *obedience* to God, and *good-will* to man. There may be a cold-blooded orthodoxy of opinion, that has no alliance with the *living* truth of Jesus; and there may be a consuming zeal for names and forms, that sits enthroned in an unfeeling heart. That soundness of mind, and expansion of affection, which are the offspring of the transforming grace of God, are equidistant from each of these extremes. With this mind, and this affection, should the Christian enter the field of controversy. By these will he be saved from that tameness that disqualifies to vindicate, with becoming spirit, the

cause of righteousness; and from that cruelty which betrays a callous heart.

That this safe and middle way has been undeviatingly pursued in these pages, the writer will not venture to affirm. Any deviations from it, however, which he may discover, will furnish matter of sincere regret; for his cause authorizes nothing but what combines all that is manly with whatever is divine. In this discussion, personal animosity can have no place: to the unkind emotions of our imperfect nature, there is no temptation. Whatever of frowning aspect may have appeared upon his page, is altogether on a public ground; and, it is believed, a style of remark still more severe than any employed, would have been justified by the sentiments which have passed in review. But asperity of remark, however well merited, can only be pleasant to the *heartless* censor: to recognise the worth of talent, to honour distinguished virtue, to rejoice in the testimonials of unaffected piety, wherever found, are employments much more congenial with the habitual temper of a well-constructed mind. In such exercises, it is hoped, we shall often find advantage united with pleasure. And although we must now contemplate our sky still darkened with thick clouds of lamentable mistakes; yet the morning of a brighter day, to the church of God, than she has long enjoyed, we hope, is about to dawn. May the rising glories of that long-wished-for day, speedily bless our world: then

the promise shall be fully realized—“*Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.*”

With affectionate regard, dear Brethren,

I bid you farewell,

GILBERT M'MASTER.

A P P E N D I X .

No. I.

DR. WATTS.

(See p. 152.)

WHAT were the opinions of Dr. Watts on the subject of the *Trinity* and *person* of Jesus Christ? It would be pleasant, indeed, could we find him among the sound divines of England; but there, it is believed, his works will not allow him to be placed. If any be disposed to distinguish between the *practical* faith of his heart, and the *speculative* articles of his creed, I have no objection. Believing, however, as I do, that God has not constituted us arbiters of the state of men, I have only to do with the latter—upon the former it is not mine to decide. The Doctor's sentiments concerning the Redeemer, will be found in his "Discourses on the Glory of Christ." The edition of the Discourses now before me is that of 1746, but a little more than a year before the author's death.—There you will find him zealously maintaining that the human soul of Christ, *created before all worlds*, is the *Lord* from heaven, spoken of—1 Cor. xv. 47.*—That in the image of this pre-existent spirit, Adam was created†—That the *sonship* of Christ belongs, exclusively, to his *human* soul‡—That the covenant of redemption was not made with a person who was the Father's *equal*, but with this *created* spirit.§ Such are some of the views which this author supposes would make the Bible more defensible. His opinions on the doctrine of the *Trinity*, may be gathered from the following address to God.

"Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any *one plain scripture*, to have informed me which of the different opinions about

* Pp. 175, 176.

† P. 203.

‡ P. 201.

§ Pp. 180, 225.

the holy *Trinity*, among the contending parties of Christians, had been true, thou *knowest* with how much *real satisfaction* and *joy*, my *un-biassed* heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me *plainly*, in any *single text*, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are *three real distinct persons* in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be *bewildered* in so many *doubts*, nor embarrassed with so many strong *fears* of assenting to the mere inventions of men, instead of divine doctrine; but I should have *humbly* and *immediately* accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them, as the only rule of my faith. Or, hadst thou been pleased so to express and include this proposition in the *several scattered parts* of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might, with care, *find out*, and with certainty *infer* this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed *all* my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and ingrafted it into my soul.

—Holy Father,—how can such weak creatures ever take in *so strange*, *so difficult*, and *so abstruse* a doctrine as this? And can this *strange* and *perplexing notion* of *three real persons*, going to make up *one* true God, be *so necessary* and *so important* a part of that Christian doctrine, which, in the Old Testament, and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understanding?"—*Watts' Works*, vol. 7, pp. 476-7. Leeds ed.

But to fully ascertain his views on the subject before us, the whole of the writings of Dr. Watts on the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Jesus Christ, must be read. The vocabulary of his nursery creed, it is probable, to some extent, the Doctor retained, long after he had abandoned the creed itself. The ambiguity of his language, his manifest desire to be in good standing with men of principles very different from his own, his destitution of ecclesiastical character, and his defect in a well-settled principle of religious belief, render it somewhat difficult to find his precise position. He often used the language of the orthodox, but claimed the right to explain the terms in his own way, and to press them into an agreement with his own peculiar opinions. Thus scraps taken from his works may be, as they have been,

—with what degree of intelligence and honesty we say not,—adduced to prove him orthodox, while taken in their full and proper connexion they prove no such thing, but the reverse.

Whatever obscurity, from the ambiguity of his language and other causes, may hang over his views, the following facts admit of no doubt—that is—that Dr. W. was an *anti-trinitarian*, and that the *distinct divine Personality* of the Son of God, as *equal* with the Father, had no place in his acknowledged creed. The labours of his life, in which he manifested more than his usual mental vigour, were in direct opposition to the orthodox faith on this whole subject. Thus the “Address” from which the foregoing quotation is taken, speaks in a style that forbids us to misunderstand him, and the suppressed pieces to which that paper was prefixed, may reasonably be supposed to have had nothing contradictory to its sentiments. His “Discourses on the Glory of Christ,” before mentioned, and his “Useful Questions” are all in the same spirit.

In the first of these Questions he asks—“What is the true meaning of the name, Son of God, given to Christ in the New Testament?” He, in reply, adduces, and remarks upon several scriptures, and adverts to the views of the orthodox, as—including an “eternal generation of the Person of the Son by the Person of the Father, in the sameness of the Divine Essence, consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father.” And then adds, “I am persuaded this can never be the sense of this Name in those texts;—for—if this be never so true, yet it is confessed to be inconceivable: and I do not think the gracious God would put such a difficult task upon the faith of young disciples,” &c. Then he adverts to the referring of—“the Sonship of Christ—rather to his *human nature*, or to his *office* of Messiah, than to such an eternal generation.” He farther says—“Christ considered as the Son of God, is throughout represented as dependent on the Father for all, and receiving all from the Father, which is hardly consistent with the idea of supreme Godhead, if that were included in Sonship.”

Again, in the same strain, he refers to 1 Cor. xv. 28; and Phil. ii., and asserts—“that the Son of God is not depressed but exalted by the economy of the [Mediatorial] kingdom.” That that kingdom shall be given up, and then the Son of God, *as Son*, shall be depressed, be brought down to his original state of inferiority. Thus he writes—“Considered as a *Son*, he is *naturally subject* to the Father, and at the end of this economical exaltation he shall return to his *natural subjection*, and shall be so for ever.”—“His *Sonship* may be better referred to his inferior nature or to his office.” Dr. W., in his theory, admits the Son to be God, not “by nature,” but as related to the Creator. This *naturally inferior Son*—Christ—as a distinct Person, is only a creature, inferior to God; but being related to the divine nature is, because of that created relation, called God.

In the third of these “Useful Questions,” the Dr. asks—“Could the Son of God properly enter into a covenant with the Father, to do and suffer what was necessary for our redemption, without a human soul?” He states the orthodox views of the subject; but proceeds to represent them as self-contradictory, and to be abandoned. According to him the covenant of redemption was made between the one Person in God—that is, the Father—for he admits of only one Person in Jehovah, and his, the Dr’s., supposed super-angelic spirit, created before all worlds, and the creator of the world, which, absurdly enough, he calls the *human* soul of Christ. Then he says—“If we suppose the human soul of Christ to have a pre-existent state of joy, &c., before the world was created, these expressions (the scriptures that speak on the subject) are great and noble, are just and true.” But if we take them in the orthodox view, as to the divine Personality of the Saviour, he says—“Then all these have very little justice or propriety in them.” He adds—“According to the common—(the orthodox) explication of the doctrine of the Persons in the Trinity, we can have no ideas under all their glorious and affectionate representations of this

transaction.” And again—“One of these beings or Persons covenanting, seems to be inferior to the other.” “If we give ourselves leave to conceive of the human soul of Christ, in its pre-existent state, as the *πρωτοτοκος*, *the first form of every creature*,—then here are proper subjects for these federal transactions.”

In the fourth of his Questions, he asks—“Is the Godhead of Christ and the Godhead of the Father, one and the same?” This question he answers in the affirmative. But what does he mean? The ambiguity of his language and his confusion of thought are well calculated to entrap and deceive the unwary, and to furnish a momentary countenance for an unfair advocate of his orthodoxy. The Godhead of the Father and of the Son is the same, he admits. The Godhead is a *unit*. It is one. According to his scheme, in that Godhead, naturally and eternally, there is but one Person—the Father. The pre-existent soul, or spirit, of Christ is a mere creature—has no Deity of its own; but as an exalted and favoured creature is related in a near friendship with the Father, and in virtue of this relation, or created union—can lay some claim to Deity. Strip his language of its ambiguity, and his thought of its indistinctness, and, in the scheme of Dr. W., the question would be—“Is God the Father the Godhead of Christ?” And the answer would be, yes. The Dr’s. denial of distinct Persons, naturally and eternally, in the one Jehovah, and his doctrine of the pre-existence of the human soul of Christ,—which really is no *human* soul at all—fills his whole scheme with error, and spreads over it a bewildering confusion.

In his deprecations of *tests* of orthodoxy, the Dr. was sufficiently explicit, and in his refusal of consent to such a measure, at the meetings of Salters’ Hall, where it was discussed with sufficient earnestness, and urged by Mr. Bradbury and others, he was consistent. For him an orthodox test would not have been safe.

In a letter to Dr. Coleman of February 11th, 1747, accom-

panying his volume on "The Glory of Christ," Dr. Watts says, "I think I have said every thing concerning the Son of God which Scripture says; but I *could not go* so far as to say, with some orthodox divines, that the *Son is equal* with the Father." And in his preface and introduction to his treatise on the Trinity, published in 1722, twenty-six years before his death, he admits of a Trinity, but mark his language,— "Three such agents or PRINCIPLES of action, as may *reasonably be called persons.*" *Principles of action*—figurative, but *not real Persons.*

As an anti-trinitarian and opposer of the truth on the subject of the divine Personality of the Redeemer, he was understood by his contemporaries. The justly distinguished author of the volumes on "The great Mystery of Godliness," the Rev. Thomas Bradbury,* in 1725, charged Dr. W. with "making the Divinity of Christ to evaporate into a mere attribute." And at a subsequent period said to the Dr.—"It is pity, after you have been more than thirty years a teacher of others, you are yet to learn the first principles of the oracles of God. Was Dr. Owen's church to be taught another Jesus? That the Son and the Spirit were only two powers in the Divine nature!"

Dr. Doddridge was his personal friend, companion, and admirer. He was capable of understanding, and certainly cannot be suspected of any disposition to misrepresent the principles of Dr. W. from which perhaps his own were not very different. Attend to the statement of Dr. Doddridge on this subject:—

"For as much as—there is such a change and humiliation asserted concerning Christ, as *could not* properly be asserted concerning an

* The advocates of Dr. Watts admit Mr. Bradbury to have been a "man of wit"—a man of genius; but, to diminish the weight of his testimony, add—"he was a man of spleen." The enlightened and serious reader of the volumes on "The Mystery of Godliness" will not thus judge. In those volumes, he will trace the operations of a mind deeply imbued with the love of truth, and of a spirit that was no stranger to the tender sensibilities of evangelical religion.

eternal and immutable being, as such, there is reason to believe that Christ had, *before his incarnation, a created or derived nature*, which would admit of such a change.”—*Watts’ Diss. on the Trin.* No. 3; Works, vol. 6, pp. 518—54. (See *Doddr.* vol. 2, p. 154.)

Again, “Dr. Watts maintained One Supreme God dwelling in the human nature of Christ, which he supposes to have existed the first of all creatures; and speaks of the divine *Logos* as the *wisdom* of God, and the Holy Spirit as the divine *power*, or the *influence* and *effect* of it; which he says is a SCRIPTURAL person, *i. e.* spoken of *figuratively* in Scripture, under personal characters.—*Watts’ Diss.* No. 7; Works, vol. 6, p. 630.”—(See *Doddr.* vol. 2, p. 193.)

He also referred Christ’s being *the only begotten Son of God*, “to his being the promised Messiah, or to his extraordinary conception, and exaltation to his kingdom as Mediator.”—(See *Doddr.* vol. 2, p. 178.)

President Edwards thus understood Dr. W., and urges fourteen distinct arguments against his hypothesis concerning Jesus Christ. He has this remark—“According to what seems to be Dr. Watts’ scheme, the Son of God is *no distinct divine person from the Father.*”^{*} That his son, the late Dr. Edwards, viewed the subject in a similar light, is more than presumable, from the fact, that he transcribed these arguments of his venerable father for the press. The same conclusion may be drawn in respect of Dr. Erskine, of Edinburgh, from the interest he took in the publication of these Essays of the President of *Nassau Hall*; and from the special notice which he takes of *that* part of them, containing the refutation of the scheme of Dr. W.

In the same light are these writings of Dr. W. understood by the venerable Dr. Anderson.† “He taught,” says Dr. A., “that the Holy Spirit is not a person really distinct from the Father, but the divine *power*—that there are no *real distinct persons* in the Godhead.” In a similar point of view is the subject contemplated by the Rev. James R. Willson, in his very interesting “History of opinions on the Atonement.” Hear the confession of another—It is that of Dr. Ely. “We cannot

* Essays.

† *Vindiciæ Cantus Dom.* p. 73.

deny," says Dr. E, "that Dr. Watts' treatise has wrought *much mischief*.—It was the book which first turned the head of the Rev. John Sherman—we wish the *pernicious* consequences of that treatise had terminated here."*

In the same page we are informed, that Mr. Allison, late chaplain to Congress, last January, preached the heresy to our representatives, and gave Dr. W. as the *author* of the doctrine.

Such were the opinions of Dr. W., written and left on record by himself; and thus have these opinions been understood by *Bradbury, Doddridge, the two Edwardses, Erskine, Anderson, Willson, Ely, &c.* And it is notorious, that every Anti-trinitarian, who has read his works, claims him as of that school. His solemn address admits of no explanation. If ever man is serious in the expression of his sentiments, it is when he addresses God; and, if ever he expresses those sentiments with precision, it is when he writes them. Dr. W. has done both—He ventured to tell his Maker that the doctrine of three *real* persons in the Godhead, is a *strange* and *perplexing notion*, which we *cannot* receive; and which is not even *inferable* from the *whole* contents of the Book of God!

The truth is, "comparatively few divines of any class,—at the darkened period in which Dr. W. lived and wrote, held out the *glimmering* lamp of sound evangelical instruction."† Giving too much way to the gambols of imagination, it "occasionally carried him out [say his friends] into moral and sentimental excursions, beyond the usual limits of plain evangelical truth."‡—And, according to the historian of the English dissenters,§ from these excursions it was no easy task to bring him back. Childishly fond of something new, over the creatures of his fancy he doted with an overweening affection; not because they were legitimate, but because they were his own.

* Rev. No. 2, p. 221.

† Ibid.

‡ Christ. Obs.

§ Bogue.

What upon this fundamental subject were the views of Dr. W.? Certainly not those of Christianity. They might be those of a slightly modified Arianism, but not less gross or erroneous than those of the Alexandrian presbyter. The scheme of both was really a form of the old Oriental Gnosticism. The superangelic spirit of Arius and Watts was but an *Æon* of the Gnostics. The scheme of W. may be Gnosticism, but Christianity it is not. We understand his scheme as did Bradbury, Doddridge, Edwards, and, perhaps, as every one understands him who has attentively read his works. Why then be specially reproached for understanding what they understood, and for saying what they said? That these vagaries of the Dr. were neither the fruits of youthful indiscretion, nor of the infirmities of advanced years, he assures us himself. In the preface to his "Useful Questions," he certifies his readers that "These papers are the product of that part of his life, when his *powers of mind and body* were in full vigour." That he abandoned them at a late period of his life, it would be grateful to be assured of; but of the fact no evidence has been given. The well meant attempt of Mr. Toplady to prove it, it is well known, was a failure. And his permission of the continuance of the orthodox phraseology of his poetry will not do it. The Dr's. correspondence with Mr. Martin Tomkins, an anti-trinitarian, will explain why he did not alter, as he wished to do, the sentiments of his religious poetry. The language of poetry is no certain index of the principles of the poet. The modern Transcendentalist is often poetic in his theology, and in an evangelical strain he can take the language of Rutherford, and Owen, and Edwards, and talk of a close walk with God, and of intimate communion with him. The pantheism of transcendentalists allows them thus to speak a very spiritual language, while they may mean no more than their exposure to a July sun or a December frost, to a gentle shower or a storm of hail. The poetry of fancy will not do away the heresy of prose. This brings to mind a remarkable coin-

vidence. *Bardesanes of Edessa*, of the second century, and *Watts of Southampton*, of the eighteenth century, were both distinguished for their advocacy of error, and both were poets, and are the only poets, as far as recollected, who attempted an *imitation* of the book of Psalms, each in a book of 150 hymns. If history is to be credited, the Gnostic, as a poet, was not inferior to him of Southampton.

But why should the suggestion of a doubt as to the orthodoxy of Dr. W. produce so much sensibility? Why not contend, with equal zeal, for the soundness of *Robinson* and *Priestley*? No man will hesitate to place *Robinson*, the author of the *Village Sermons*, and *Watts*, in the same rank as to orthodoxy. The same *Robinson*, the author of *Ecclesiastical Researches*, and *Priestley*, the historian of *Early Opinions*, were fellow labourers in the same cause of heresy—Why then separate *Watts*, *Robinson*, and *Priestley*? They were all learned and amiable men; and all *equally* mistaken in the *first* principles of true religion—the *object* and *medium* of worship. Is it because *Watts* gave a book of Psalms to orthodox churches?

To the religious principles of her psalmist the church cannot be indifferent. And to none of his works, when they come in the way of her members, are they likely to be indifferent. The works of Dr. W. are in market; and in the gossip of the religious newspapers of the day his name is celebrated as divine. The title by which the Spirit of God has designated an inspired Poet and Prophet, is transferred to him—"The sweet Psalmist of Israel;" and his verses have been elevated to the place of the displaced Psalms of inspiration; yet where is the enlightened Christian of any name, who, knowing what he was doing, would put in the hand of his son, or into that of any serious inquirer after fundamental truth, the "Useful Questions concerning Jesus Christ," by Dr. W., or his more ingenious and laboured work, "The Glory of Christ?" By those in the use of his hymns in the Psalmody of the Church, no note of warning

is sounded indicating the danger of his errors. His works have for a time perplexed many, and finally perverted others, and when the temptation to heresy has the sanction of the name of the "sweet Psalmist" of the church, the evil work among her members will take its course. These considerations justify this notice of these fatal errors. The interests, too, of historical verity have some claim to our regard. The defence of reputation against unfounded imputations of no very generous character, may be left to time without farther remark. It ought to be felt by Christians, that the leading psalmist of their church should have been a professed believer and advocate of the truth respecting the God of Israel. The influence which his name is likely to exert upon the faith of the church demands this. But such, however, was not the profession and advocacy of the Southampton poet.

No. II.

MODE OF SINGING.

IN Psalmody the music should be solemn and simple. Perhaps there might be a general reform effected in it by the banishment of every difficult tune, and the adoption of a manner better calculated to engage the attention to the sentiment, rather than to the sound. Would not the *chanting* of the Psalms in prose, be more congenial with the nature of sacred worship, than the modish art, which, almost universally, is at war with the engagement of the mind and the heart? I have said, *chanting* the Psalms in *prose*; not that I am displeased with a measured version, for if the translation be *fair*, whether it be in prose or verse, it is equally the word of God. The Westminster Directory enjoins it on the whole congregation to unite in this service, and to sing directly on, except in a given case. The spirit of that in-

junction has the sanction of good sense. One very general practice, however, cannot be reprobated in terms too strong; that of an entire congregation, say of a thousand, or fifteen hundred persons, resigning the *whole* of this part of worship to a dozen or two, usually of the most trifling characters; for the choir demands no qualification but a well-tuned voice. The *whole* attention is *obviously* devoted to the music. The *notes* of the tune frequently occupy the place of the *Psalm Book!* And this *farce*—this outrage upon devotion—is called religious worship! Why not employ *this choir* to *say* or *sing* the prayers of the church, and thus do the whole of the devotional service by proxy?

Thirty-five years ago, while the author was, in the United States, pleading for an inspired Psalmody, chanted in prose, untrammelled by unmeaning rhyme, the Rev. Andrew Fuller, D. D., was in England, advocating the same cause. The coincidence is not ungrateful. See a previous reference to the views of Dr. Fuller on the subject.

No. III.

The fulness of the Old Testament revelation was not equal to that of the New Testament. The light of the former was not adequate to that of the latter. But has not this light of the latter penetrated the shadowy envelope of the former, and to Christian eyes unfolded the deep things of God which lay under the symbolic and prophetic cover? And, possibly, it may be found that the difference, in our view, of the two economies is more in the circumstance than the substance. "The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," constituted the great subjects of ancient prophetic discovery. 1 Pet. i. 11. Were not the *principles* of these well under-

stood? Were not their *time* and the *manner of their time* the questions of doubt, rather than the things themselves?

The church has always been one, and her religion, in its essential attributes, has ever been the same. This religion at all times embraced the truth of the Triune God, the mediation of the Son of God in our nature, the agency of the Holy Spirit, the existence of the eternal covenant of redemption, the same gospel, the renovation of the soul by divine grace, the justification of the believing sinner, the necessity of holiness, the adoption of the saved sinner into the family of God, the immortality of the soul, the stability of the promise, a future judgment, the endless glory of the saint, and the terrible retributions of the finally impenitent and unbelieving. The ancient church had her *principles* of religion before she had her *ritual*. She had her priests and her prophets to instruct her. Levit. x. 11; Mal. ii. 7; Jer. xxv. 4. The rites were numerous, but, as *mere rites*, were of easy apprehension, not requiring much of deep inquiry. Not so, however, as to the import and bearing of the profound truths which they involved and were intended to illustrate. Hence the profound study by day and by night of the great and godly men of that economy. The Psalms and the prophets give us the essence of the attainments of the living church of Israel, as found spread out in her unrecorded ministrations, communion, and experience.

All outward rites of every economy are, when separated from their living principles, *carnal, weak, and beggarly*. The *baptismal regeneration* and the *opus operatum* of the papacy, in the other sacrament, are as weak, carnal and beggarly as any Levitical rite ever was to the unbelieving Jew; and so are New Testament divine institutions themselves, when left as mere shells in their lifeless forms. Is it not of the Levitical ceremonials, when thus separated from their life-giving principle, that Paul writes so disparagingly, and not of God's appointments in their instituted relations to the principles of a spiritual religion? Who, in our times, understood better

than did Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and many others of the ancient saints, the depths of a spiritual religion? These depths of experimental religion are the subject matter of the book of Psalms. Could that deep experimental religion have existed without the deep *principles* of vital godliness? It was not the violent emotion of blind impulse. Those Psalms are not mere ritual observances. They unfold, and in their developments exhibit, the depths of vital religion; and more of its practical, spiritual influence than any other book—perhaps than all the other books—of the sacred volume.

We shall not repeat the ill-advised language of inferior men in reference to those inspired compositions, nor yet the ill-timed jeers of those of higher rank, who can find it convenient to cast them forth, at the use of a plain and faithful version of those songs of inspiration, and those who use them. Have they forgotten that these songs, and in this same version,—which is spoken of as offensive to those of a modish taste,—were sung by their martyr ancestors in the sanctuary, and at the stake; and till a very late period, by their more immediate fathers? Does it escape their notice that, at this very day, a great *majority* of the most enlightened, orthodox, and spiritually-minded of the Presbyterian household use this version in the solemnities of the sanctuary? And in the matter of taste, do not those in this land, who continue the use of this scripture Psalter, find an apology in the fact, that this ancient version, even in the “minstrel land”—where distinguished minstrels still live, and write, and sing—was used by the Blairs, the Robertsons, the Reids, the Willisons, the Erskines, the Websters, of a by-gone time; and by the Chalmerses, the Lees, the Thompsons, the Candlishes, the Cooks, the Symingtons, the Gools, the Fairbairns, the M’Coshes, and others, not less distinguished, in our own age? Without much annoyance, in such company,—in this exercise,—the sneers of those who can sneer at it, may be borne. Sentiment is preferable to sound; and principle to verbiage. But serious thought, good temper, and candid in-

quiry, by the blessing of God, will correct and remove the unhappy effects of rash and ill-advised sayings and doings, as well as the evil results of the arrogance of numbers, or of the petulance of a party spirit. We are persuaded that in the church at large there is an amount of true principle and sound character, adequate, if put in requisition, to the satisfactory adjustment of this and other subjects of similar import, now in discussion before several departments of the family of God. For this happy issue we wait in hope.







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